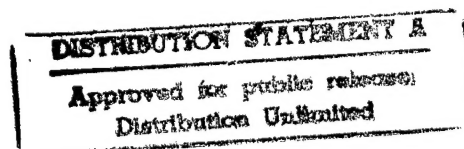


IMPERIAL MILITARY POLICY AND THE
BECHUANALAND PIONEERS AND GUNNERS
DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR

Deborah A. Shackleton, Major, USAF

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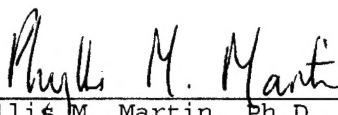


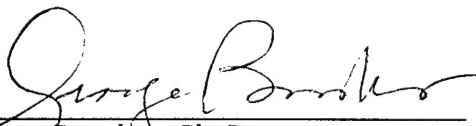
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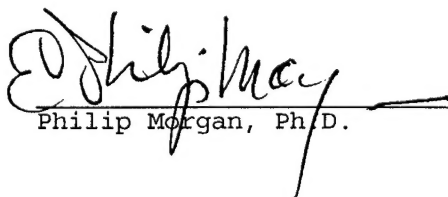
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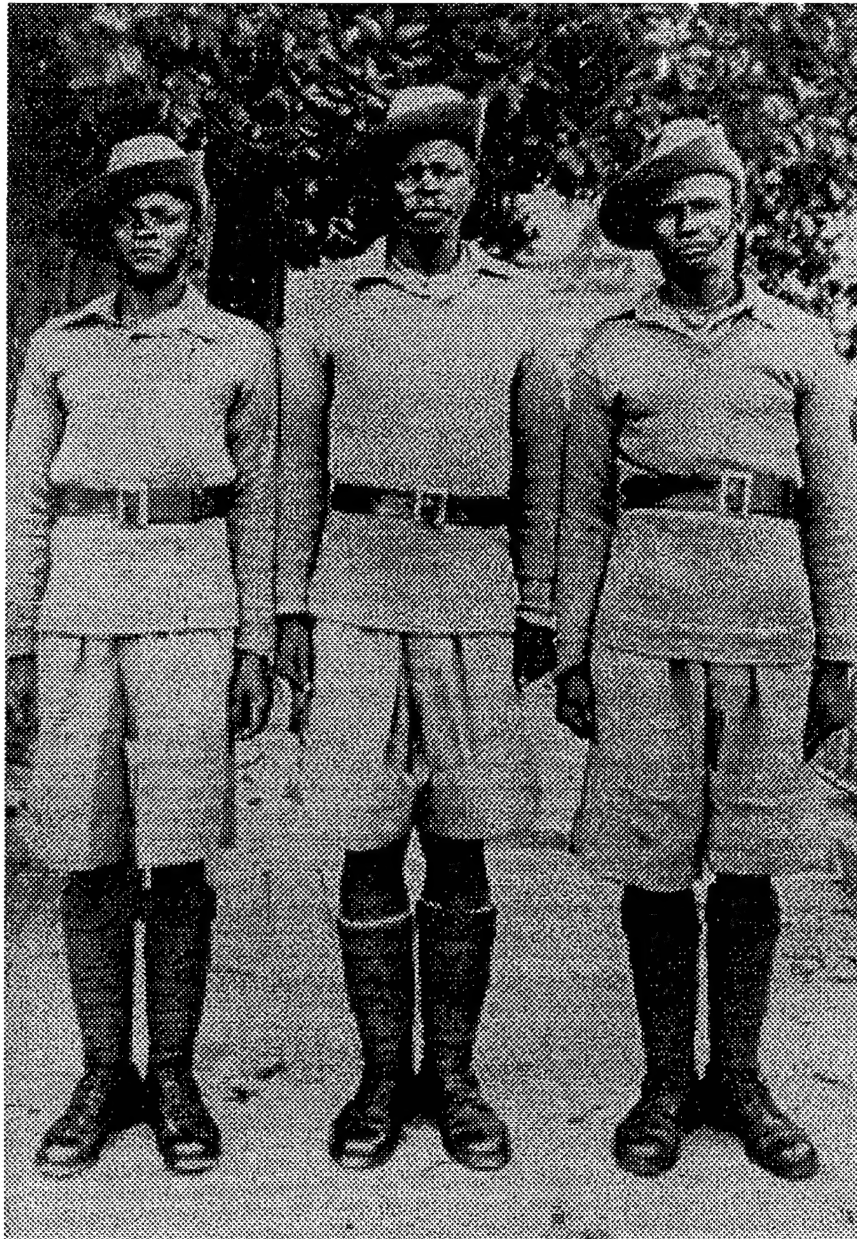
Deborah A. Shackleton

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Dedicated to all the brave men from Botswana
who served during the Second World War

"We hope that we shall always be found worthy
of the tribe that has sent us and we shall
not flinch no matter how hard the struggle,
how heavy the toil set for us to perform.
We shall do it with free will and singleness
of heart."

C.S.M. S. Abel
1981 Bechuana Coy
20 November 1941



PODITHOMO KELOBE, MAPENA RAMODISA, AND
NTSOSANA DIKOTANA

BECHUANALAND PIONEERS

PERMISSION TO USE PHOTO GIVEN BY VETERAN PODITHOMO KOLOBE ON
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Many people have contributed to the preparation of this dissertation but none more than my mentor at Indiana University, Professor Phyllis M. Martin. Professor Martin has steadfastly provided inspiration and support as the project evolved through the many stages of research and writing. I wish also to thank Professor Melvin Page, East Tennessee State University, for suggesting the topic to me. Dr. David Killingray, Kings College, London, shared with me his extensive knowledge of British colonial military history. Neil Parsons and the staff of the Institute of Commonwealth Studies in London helped me gain access to Michael Crowder's private papers. Special thanks are also owed to the United States Air Force Academy and to Colonel Carl Reddel, USAF, for giving me the opportunity to return to graduate school.

I wish to thank all the special friends I made in Botswana during my field research in 1994. Dr. Jeff Ramsay provided me with in-country research affiliation and support. My friend and colleague, Barry Morton, arranged temporary housing, assisted in my research, and made great pizza. Special thanks to my interpreter, Mmualefhe Raditladi, who drove the back roads in the villages in search of veterans to interview. The research assistants at the Botswana National Archives were always friendly and extremely helpful. But most importantly, I owe a great debt to the veterans who were willing to talk to me about their war experiences.

Others sustained me in more personal ways. My sons, Kelly and Christopher, were patient and understanding when Mom was too busy to give full attention to their activities. My husband, Wayne, was there when the going was worst. Without the values that Mom instilled in me, I cannot imagine myself ever undertaking such an effort. And to my very special friend and colleague, Nancy Jacobs, now at Brown University, a special thanks for all the times you were there for me.

ABSTRACT

DEBORAH A. SHACKLETON

BRITISH IMPERIAL POLICY AND THE
BECHUANALAND PIONEERS AND GUNNERS
DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR
(1939-1946)

This is a study of how a small British Protectorate in southern Africa went about the complex process of organizing its human and material resources for the Second World War. That process--the process of mobilization--is used as a lens for examining the evolution of British military policy in Bechuanaland and how it affected the employment of African soldiers. From the end of the nineteenth century, the British developed personal and military relations with Africans that cumulatively subordinated Africans to noncombattants in "white men's wars".

British military needs and policies changed over time with the changing fortunes of its empire. In theory, the British Regular Army was responsible for the defense of British strategic interests around the globe. However, Great Britain lacked the manpower to defend its possessions from foreign enemies. As a result, the British army heavily recruited colonial soldiers to augment its regiments during the Second World War. BaTswana soldiers were recruited into British auxiliary support units primarily as laborers and anti-aircraft gunners. They served in North Africa, the Middle East and Italy throughout the war.

Britain's colonial ideology regarding African soldiers was patronizing and cloaked in self-serving protectionism. Africans were to be protected from corrupting influences and wider global conflicts. The policy was unrealistic and difficult to implement as news of the Second World War spread. BaTswana leaders responded quickly to the declaration

of war, began recruiting campaigns, and helped organize military training facilities. However, African soldiers had fewer opportunities for advancement within the British army and cases of racial discrimination abounded. Despite these inequalities, African soldiers strived to maintain a sense of national identity or "corporateness." War-time experiences led to a broadening in the soldier's outlook, increased self-confidence, and a greater understanding of the reciprocal nature of the imperial war effort.

Much of the material on which this study is based was drawn from printed primary sources. In addition, extensive use was made of unpublished materials in the Public Record Office and the Institute of Commonwealth Studies in London, the Botswana National Archives, and oral interviews with veterans.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AA	Anti-Aircraft Units
AAPC	African Auxiliary Pioneer Corps
ACF	African Colonial Forces
AEC	Army Educational Corps
AOR	African Other Ranks
APC	African Pioneer Corps
AWOL	Absent Without Leave
BBP	Bechuanaland Border Police
BNA	Botswana National Archives
BNCO	British Non-Commissioned Officers
BOR	British Other Ranks
BSA	British South Africa Company
C-in-C	Commander in Chief
CID	Committee of Imperial Defense
CMF	Central Mediterranean Forces
CMR	Cape Mounted Riflemen
CSM	Company Sergeant Major
CO	Commanding Officer
COL	Colonel
COY	Company
CPL	Corporal
DC	District Commissioner
DCG	District Commissioner-Gaborone
DCS	District Commissioner-Serowe
GHQ	General Headquarters
HAA	Heavy Anti-Aircraft Units
HCT	High Commissioned Territories
JAH	Journal of African History
JMAS	Journal of Modern African Studies
KAR	Kings African Rifles
LMS	London Missionary Society
LT	Lieutenant
MEF	Middle East Forces
NCO	Non-Commissioned Officer
NRC	Native Recruiting Corporation
PRO	Public Records Office in London
RSM	Regimental Sergeant Major
SANLC	South African Native Labor Contingent
SANMC	South African Native Military Corps
SAR	South African Republic
SGT	Sergeant
UDF	Union Defense Forces
WAFF	West African Frontier Force
WNLA	Witwatersrand Native Labour Association
WO	Warrant Officer

INTRODUCTION

This is a study of the historical development of British military policy in colonial Bechuanaland and its impact on the recruitment, military training and service of BaTswana¹ soldiers during the Second World War. Using British government documents, British and South African official correspondence, private papers, mission records, newspapers and oral testimonies recorded with veterans during field study in the summer of 1994, the study attempts to answer the following broad questions: What were the constraints which circumscribed the role of Africans in the war effort? What recruiting methods were employed by British colonial officials and African leaders in Bechuanaland during the Second World War? What were the realities of black war-time service in North Africa, the Middle East and Europe between 1940 and 1945? How were African military units demobilized after the war? As the project evolved, I became more interested in the army as an agency of social change which transformed the primarily rural BaTswana person into "soldiers of the realm." The concept of the military as an "uplifting" or "civilizing" force was not revolutionary from a British perspective, it was a major goal throughout the colonies. However, perplexing problems surfaced regarding the social attitudes of white army leaders and how they circumscribed African integration and acceptance within the military culture. Additionally, African responses to recruitment, training and service needed further study which led to a new line of inquiry. What effect did village politics, labor resources, and family life in the Protectorate have on mobilization? What was the nature of work relations and the extent of "military "corporateness" within BaTswana military units? How were African soldiers treated by their commanders and how did they adapt to the constraints of a rigid rank

¹The people who speak the SeTswana language and conform to SeTswana norms; also any citizen of the Republic of Botswana. The prefix Ba- is the plural form; MoTswana is the singular form.

structure? What were the impacts of military service on economic, social and political perceptions of the soldiers during the war? How did African soldiers cope with the physical separation from their homes and other deprivations of war? Thus the aim of the project is to provide an understanding of the significance of military mobilization in Bechuanaland during the Second World War; and to trace the effects of British military policy on African soldiers between 1941-46.

I soon discovered that I could not adequately appraise the BaTswana military experience without examining previous conflicts in which they had participated, because much of what had transpired before influenced the realities of war mobilization in 1940. To complete the study, the formulation of British military policy prior to the Second World War also needed investigation. The decision of British leaders to rely on African soldiers throughout the region was shaped by a variety of social, political, and military circumstances that conspired to make colonial participation the only practical answer to Britain's manpower difficulties in times of conflict.

Several themes ran through British imperial military history prior to the Second World War. One of the most prevalent was that, although a "great power," Great Britain had military limitations. Certainly being the greatest naval power of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had facilitated imperial expansion worldwide. It had also been traditional military policy to use seapower to protect British security interests in Europe. However, with an empire which amounted to eleven and a half million square miles, eight million of which lay in the continents of Asia, Africa and America, a powerful navy was not enough, land forces were also necessary. Yet, this was where Great Britain's weakness lay. Although the doctrines of imperialism and paramountcy required a strong national army, anti-imperialists resisted plans to build one.

In the face of the inadequacy of British troops to meet imperial needs, the metropole relied heavily on the Indian Army in its defense

plans, and this is another important theme in British military history. Since the founding of the Indian Army in the middle of the eighteenth century, it had become the primary instrument of imperial defense in Asia. Because of its outstanding record, loyalty and discipline, Great Britain decided to use these troops outside of Asia for the first time in Egypt in 1801. Sepoy levies composed of Madrasis, Bengalis, Pathans, Gurkha and Sikhs were used thereafter in overseas service. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the use of Indian soldiers became a necessity as new challenges throughout the empire threatened the *pax Britannia*. As India became overtaxed, other sources of colonial manpower were sought. The idea of a British imperial African Army was first seriously considered during the First World War and continued to play a significant role in defense of imperial interests until 1950.

Another dominant influence in British military policy was the need to run the empire on the cheap. By the mid 1850s, the defense of the empire was under serious review. It had long been debated that the colonies should take on more responsibility for their own self-defense. In 1861 practically every colony had an imperial garrison. The average number of troops which were employed in garrisoning the colonies, India excluded, was, for the ten years 1851-61, between 42,000 and 43,000.² The total expenditure on colonial defense amounted to over 3 million pounds sterling, and the colonies contributed to this sum about one-tenth, or £350,000.³ This was a tremendous strain on the military resources and finances of Great Britain. Government officials decided it was time the dependencies should organize and pay for their own civil defense to include locally recruited armies. The removal of British imperial garrisons, as a fixed policy, was adopted in the year 1867. However, this policy in no way changed British expectations of military

²Sir Charles Lucas, *The Empire at War*, Vol. I., (England: Oxford University Press, 1921), 81.

³*Ibid.*

support in time of war. Great Britain expected the colonies to assist with military recruitment in time of war, but there was never a coordinated emergency defense plan which provided a dependable source of trained men. British policy was just the reverse of that which had guided the German Government, which adopted as their standard readiness and fitness for war-the Prussian military *Kriegsverin*.⁴

The South African War, 1899-1902, had shown that the British Regular Army, as organized before the war, was by itself inadequate for the needs of the empire. The challenge was to get the colonies to agree to some uniform plan for creating a body of troops which could be put in line with British Regular troops against imperial enemies. In 1907, at the Imperial Defence Conference a resolution was passed which committed the colonies to share the burden of imperial defense.⁵ However, plans for speedy mobilization were not forthcoming and the resolution resulted in limited training for war. Imperial defense, imperial consolidation and imperial reciprocity, embodied in the British "imperial code," remained an illusive dream.

World War One confirmed that Great Britain, although a naval superpower, could not field an army large enough to protect its global interests against the Germans. Total mobilization of all available manpower in the empire was needed, including utilizing Indian and African soldiers in Europe for the first time. On the eve of the Great War, the overseas forces of the empire consisted of the Indian Army, nearing 238,000 strong (78,000 were Europeans and the rest Indians); Dominion military forces at various levels of training; and self-defense units in the colonies.⁶ The policy of withdrawing the imperial garrisons now had an unexpected advantage since it forced the colonies

⁴The union for military purposes which preceded the consolidation of Germany.

⁵Sir Charles Lucas, *The Empire at War*, Vol. I., 198.

⁶*Ibid.*, 254. The Dominions were self-governing nations of the British Empire other than the United Kingdom that acknowledged the British monarch as head of state, i.e. Canada and Australia.

to produce local defense plans and military forces which could now be tapped. Two examples of home-grown defense forces in British colonies in tropical Africa were the West African Frontier Force and the King's African Rifles. Amidst great controversy, the use of African colonial forces by Great Britain in World War One was repeated during the Second World War.

It is within the context of the slow evolution of British military policy that my case study of the Bechuanaland Pioneers and Gunners in the Second World War must be placed. As one of the three High Commissioned Territories (HCT) under British protection, Botswana (then Bechuanaland) was an insignificant military member of the British empire. Yet, it came to the aid of Great Britain in the Boer War, the Great War and the Second World War. Due to the proximity of Bechuanaland to South Africa, and South African continued interest in its political affairs, the South African government had an unprecedented role in determining British military policy in this Protectorate.

Because Great Britain had not "solved" many of the military problems discussed above, every source of military power within the empire was tapped for the war against Hitler's Germany. The British, ill-prepared in 1939, organized and trained its colonial forces with a view to their individual role in the waging of the war. Ten thousand men from Bechuanaland were organized into the African Auxiliary Pioneer Corps (AAPC). They were largely trained as laborers and anti-aircraft gunners and were often deployed with the famous Allied 5th and 8th Armies in North Africa, the Middle East and Italy between 1941-1946.

The government of Bechuanaland, consisting of appointed British colonial officials and hereditary indigenous leaders, supported the Allied cause against the Axis Powers with varying degrees of enthusiasm and loyalty. By examining Bechuanaland's contributions during the war, the dynamic social and political conditions within the colony are revealed. The military roles assigned to African soldiers from

Bechuanaland, especially labor duties, reflected societal values held by most whites in colonial southern Africa. Military units from Bechuanaland were composed mainly of African rural farmers, a few chief's sons, miners, and adventurous youths. These men generally occupied the lowest positions within the armed forces. At the other end of the British regimental hierarchy, white men recruited largely from Bechuanaland and South Africa, constituted the European officer and non-commissioned officer corps. Just as in the armies of eighteenth-century Europe, a marked social and economic gulf separated officers and enlisted men within British colonial armed forces. In a word, the composition of the AAPC reflected the division of race and class which marked nearly every colonial society in Africa.

The BaTswana experience also demonstrates how British colonial forces were recruited, organized and trained. The men were expected to inculcate all the idiosyncrasies of British military life, especially those aspects related to fidelity and obedience. Following their induction and oath, the soldiers received training in the military arts of war. Once farmers and miners with a diversity of skills, they now were required as a group to learn saluting, drill, and how to fire weapons accurately and efficiently. Within Pioneer (labor) units, most of the occupations required very little intensive training and the men learned as they performed their everyday tasks. However, some military job specialties required in-depth instruction such as driving large vehicles and ambulances, fire-fighting and anti-aircraft gunnery.

During the Second World War, African soldiers experienced many new and perhaps frightening changes to their life. British unit (company level) inspection reports provide fascinating and often vivid glimpses into otherwise obscure conditions of military life endured by members of the AAPC. Soldiers separated from their friends and family for extended periods of time in strange, foreign lands experienced loneliness, physical deprivations, fatigue, sickness and a decrease in morale. At a

more analytical level, however, these records document significant aspects of social tension within AAPC companies, and the mediating function of British welfare officers and higher-ranking African sergeants assigned to these military units.

Social relations within AAPC military units were sophisticated and complex encompassing the artificial boundaries imposed by the rank structure and the inherent aspects of race and class. As the war progressed and the Allied armies pushed northward through the rough terrain of Italy, AAPC units were pushed to their physical and emotional limits. Subsequently, the social hegemony of British commanders over their African subordinates was threatened by various forms of resistance and active protest. Indigenous political systems in Bechuanaland had historically been based on a participatory council system. Unused to the European arbitrary hierarchical system of decision-making, BaTswana men began to make their voices heard. Africans understandably objected to race discrimination, differential access to leisure time and recreational facilities, forced separation from their original companies, unequal pay and job exclusions, and a discretionary leave policy. However, their demands were met with limited success. British high-ranking military officials were reluctant to interfere with local commander's decisions and policies. But when blatant abuses were discovered, commanders were reprimanded and forced to comply with army directives. Ultimately, British officials in positions of military power changed few established policies as they pertained to African soldiers throughout the Second World War. Despite many adversities, military life produced concomitant benefits.

As a result of their military experiences during the Second World War, the BaTswana formed new broader identities. Rural peasants, miners and youths grew confident in their abilities as soldiers and world travellers. They became better informed about global events and began to form opinions based on their new experiences. African soldiers

persistently questioned white domination both abroad and at home. As a group, they formed a "corporate consciousness" through their shared work and recreational experiences. Many had improved their reading and writing skills as well as other occupational skills. Some expressed their new religiosity by joining organized church groups. The transparent changes of becoming an AAPC soldier were accompanied by many complex internal transformations which are impossible to identify and assess through the very limited nature of the historical record. Unfortunately, fifty years has also blurred many memories of the war for the Bechuanaland veterans. Arguably, war has a continuous effect on the participants and society, but after reviewing my research and oral interviews, it is evident that very little of what these men internally absorbed can be retrieved at this point in time.

After the war, BaTswana veterans returned home to their families and assumed their previous occupations. Although there were no veteran associations in Bechuanaland and most soldiers remained politically inactive, they continued to share a common sense of national pride and achievement for having participated in the Second World War. It would take Bechuanaland several decades to gain nationhood, but the war had brought the people closer together in a common cause.

Compared to studies of the First World War, the Second World War has received less attention from African historians, but a few studies have been done. Adrienne Israel and Wendell Holbrook did case studies on the impact of war mobilization in West Africa.⁷ Michael Crowder contributed an article in the Cambridge History of Africa titled "The Second World War: Prelude to Decolonization in Africa" which examined African contributions during the war and political and economic

⁷Adrienne Israel, "Measuring the War Experience: Ghanian Soldiers In World War II," Journal of Modern African Studies 25, no. 1 (1987): 159-168 and Wendell P. Holbrook, "British Propaganda and the Mobilization of the Gold Coast War Effort, 1939-1945," Journal of African History 26 (1985): 347-361.

changes in the postwar years.⁸ A 1984 conference in London at the School of Oriental and African Studies (S.O.A.S.) elicited over thirty papers by scholars from Africa, Europe and North America on a wide variety of topics dealing with the war: political, economic, social and cultural. The conference papers were organized into a book, Africa and the Second World War, edited by Richard Rathbone and David Killingray.⁹ The newest study on the French policy of conscription in French West Africa which provided interesting comparative information to British policies in southern Africa during the war is Nancy Lawler's Ph.D. dissertation, "Soldiers of Misfortune: The Tirailleurs Senegalais of the Cote d'Ivoire in World War Two".¹⁰ The contribution of Bechuanaland soldiers has received scant attention by historians.

There are only a few short articles and one "official history" written specifically on Bechuanaland and the Second World War. One article examines conditions within the Bechuanaland Protectorate during the war and the BaTswana's responses to the demands of the war.¹¹ Kiyaga-Mulindwa-Mulindwa argues that participation in the Second World War was a colonial burden forced on the people of Bechuanaland. Recruitment was done through persuasion and a promise of political and welfare benefits at the end of the war. While the BaTswana chiefs supported the recruitment drive and often appeared to be actually representing their people, many BaTswana were not enthusiastic volunteers. Brian Mokopakgosi used archival resources and interviews to investigate the political, social and economic impact of the war on one

⁸Michael Crowder, "The Second World War: Prelude to Decolonization in Africa," Cambridge History of Africa, vol. 8, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975.

⁹David Killingray and Richard Rathbone, eds. Africa and the Second World War, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986).

¹⁰Nancy Lawler, "Soldiers of Misfortune: The Tirailleurs Senegalais of Cote d'Ivoire in World War Two." Ph.D. diss., Northwestern University, 1988.

¹¹D. Kiyaga-Mulindwa, "The Bechuanaland Protectorate and the Second World War," Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History, 12 (3 May 1984): 33-53.

particular African community, Kweneng.¹² He discovered that those who "volunteered" from Kweneng did so to please Kqosi Kgari and not to express their loyalty to the British crown, as colonial records might have us believe. Further, colonial officials exploited the BaKwena people during the war but some classes profited, especially progressive farmers and traders. H.K. Bhila analyzed the effects of wartime demands on peasant agriculture and determined that the absence of men and the emphasis on export production led to a crisis in Bechuanaland's agricultural economy.¹³ The "official history" of the Bechuanaland Pioneers and Gunners was written in 1952 by R.A.R. Bent, a member of the British Colonial Administrative Service.¹⁴ It glosses over methods of recruitment and ignores the adverse economic and social effects of the war on the Protectorate, as documented by other historians.

General histories mention the Second World War and the African Auxiliary Pioneer Corps. Sillery's Botswana: A Short Political History refers to the economy and political events.¹⁵ There is little on combat duties of African troops. The History of Botswana written by Tlou and Campbell briefly describes recruitment, resistance and effects of the Second World War in Botswana.¹⁶ B.A. Young's Bechuanaland reserves a page to the BamaNgwato and their role in the Middle East campaigns.¹⁷ Mary Benson's biography of Tshekedi Khama mentions that it was Tshekedi who was highly influential in creating the Bechuanaland Pioneer Corps.¹⁸

¹²Brian Mokapolgosi, "The Socio-Economic and Political Impact of the Second World War on the Bakwena, 1939-1950," Africa and the Second World War, David Killingray and Richard Rathbone, eds. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986).

¹³H.K. Bhila, "The Impact of the Second World War on Peasant Agriculture in Botswana, 1939-1945," Botswana Notes and Records 16 (1984): 63-71.

¹⁴R.A.R. Bent, Ten Thousand Men of Africa: The Story of the Bechuanaland Pioneers and Gunners, 1941-1946 (London: HMSO, 1952).

¹⁵Anthony Sillery, Botswana: A Short Political History (London: Methuen & Company, 1974).

¹⁶T. Tlou and A. Campbell, History of Botswana (Botswana: Macmillan Botswana Publishing Company, 1984).

¹⁷B.A. Young, Bechuanaland (London: HMSO, 1966).

¹⁸Mary Benson, Tshekedi Khama (London: Faber and Faber, 1960).

My research was stimulated in part by social and military studies from other time periods, geographical areas and in different imperial contexts. Noting the considerable scale, depth, and tenacity of the African participation in the South African War (1899), W.R. Nasson analyzed the role of transport workers. He placed particular emphasis on the structure of war-time working communities, the role of rank and file non-combatant auxiliaries, the construction of work-place culture, and the variety of responses and practices of the thousands of able-bodied men and youths who were contracted parties to the war. He argues that occupational fraternity was a powerful force which manifested itself in a solid sense of "corporate identity" which drew many of its symbolic reference points from the prevailing military atmosphere.¹⁹

Albert Grundlingh's analysis of the role of South African blacks during the First World War concludes that wars and certain aspects of military affairs are useful for refracting pertinent socio-political issues and for assessing a wide range of important historical experiences. The implication of Grundlingh's work is that military service, which seemingly only benefitted colonial interests, may have allowed Africans to continue their struggle against domination and oppression on several levels--in essence they fought a war within a war. In the context of this study, Grundlingh's examination of the issues surrounding black participation in the war, the various dimensions of the recruitment campaign, the nature of military service and the effect of wartime service on the socio-political consciousness of the participants, has influenced the structure of my study.²⁰

Colonial ideology affected attitudes regarding African participation in the Second World War. Louis Grundlingh's analysis of

¹⁹W.R. Nasson, "Moving Lord Kitchener: Black Military Transport and Supply Work in the South African War, 1899-1902," Journal of Southern African Studies 2, no.1 (October 1984), 25-51.

²⁰Albert Grundlingh, Fighting Their Own War: South African Blacks and the First World War (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1987).

the role of South African blacks during WWII shows the vociferous opposition from certain sections of the white population to the use of blacks both in non-combatant and combatant capacities. He concludes that the Union government utilized black labor in the war effort because of manpower shortages and increased defense obligations.²¹ However, South Africa refused to arm blacks because of entrenched racial attitudes. Myron Echenberg and Nancy Lawler also examine the importance of French racial attitudes during the Second World War. The French mobilized 200,000 colonial combat troops during the war and many fought in Europe. After 1944, de Gaulle ordered the "whitening" of French units near the front on political grounds. African soldiers had their frontline positions, their arms and uniforms taken away. This policy was heavily resented by Africans and may have contributed to political agitation in post-war years.²²

Despite evidence that military service led to political activity in many French colonies, recent studies challenge the view that southern African soldiers were politicized by their war experiences in post-war years (Grundlingh, 1991 and Killingray, 1989). Rather than look for postwar political radicalization in Botswana, I focused on the changes which took place during military service overseas and the influences which fashioned soldier's attitudes and economic, social, and political perceptions within the context of a constantly changing military situation between 1941-46. Headrick suggests that more important than political awakening was the sociological transformation of soldiers during the war. According to her, reactions to the war can be divided into two major related areas: those dealing with ideological concerns,

²¹Louis Grundlingh, "The Recruitment of South African Blacks for Participation in the Second World War," Africa and the Second World War, David Killingray and David Rathbone, eds. (New York: St Martin's Press, 1986).

²²Myron Echenberg, Colonial Conscripts: the Tirailleurs Senegalais in French West Africa, 1857-1960 (New Hampshire: Heinemann Educational Books, Inc., 1991).

either of a racial or political nature, and those which resulted from "modernization".²³ The formulation of British policies regarding African soldiers and the nature of modern warfare highlighted the importance of investigating these two concepts in my study.

My research has also been heavily influenced by my personal interest in military life. Sixteen years of active duty service with the United States Air Force, both as a non-commissioned officer and later as a commissioned officer, certainly impacted on my research focus, biases and assumptions. My minority status within the United States military structure (white female) has led to a strong empathy for others who struggle to win acceptance and recognition within a white, male dominated military culture. Although we have not personally suffered many of the indignities experienced by African soldiers under colonial rule, women in the military often experience sexual harassment, lower status, job exclusions, family pressures and promotion difficulties. My affinity, however, with BaTswana veterans goes beyond similar experiences. When interviewing elderly veterans in Botswana in 1994, I experienced a strong sense of comradeship with these men. They openly and eagerly discussed their military duties, the many challenges and dangers they faced, and their memories of army life and international travels. Fifty years had not obliterated the fact that we shared something in common--years of service and esprit de corps emanating from our shared British military traditions.

Soldiers share a sense of community bound by the difficult circumstances eternally present in military life.

(author)

²³Rita Headrick, "African Soldiers In World War II." Armed Forces and Society 4, no. 3 (1978): 502-526.

Chapter One: The British Empire and Military Policy Prior to 1939

Overview:

This first chapter is a historical summary of British military policy regarding the employment of colonial troops in Africa and elsewhere. The focus will be on issues of manpower, politics, racial ideology and the specific application of colonial policy in southern Africa. The purpose of my research on this topic was threefold: to understand British military policy during the colonial period as portrayed through secondary sources; to gain a better appreciation of the historical forces which impacted on official decision-making; and to analyze how the interaction of these two factors affected the employment of African soldiers from Botswana during the Second World War.

Research shows that British colonial policy regarding militarizing colonial subjects was a key element in the often opposing goals of imperial control and "protectionism" (a combination of stifling paternalism and exclusion from world events). British colonial officials recruited military forces to support colonial state structures and domestic order, but strongly opposed African involvement in European conflicts for ideological and sociological reasons. Furthermore, Africa was considered on the periphery of international politics and of no consequence to major powers of the nineteenth and twentieth century. What is not always stressed, however, is that the organization, use, and training of African soldiers was a reciprocal endeavor involving local cooperation to meet security goals (both in Africa and worldwide) as formulated by the British government. Chester Crocker, former Assistant Secretary of State for Africa, recognized this fact when he wrote, "The international strategic dimension of European military policy in Africa has received almost no attention from Africanists, while students of modern Europe have neglected the African dimension of European defence

polices".²⁴ As Europe's dominant power in the colonial period, Great Britain drew upon its empire to project its military strength.

The projection of power, the main purpose of colonial militaries, required African allies.²⁵ Although colonial rhetoric often does not reflect reality when it comes to the management and deployment of African colonial forces during crisis periods²⁶, understanding the pressures and constraints placed upon men-on-the spot by higher officials is important to this study. For example, external influences on colonial governments were a major factor in determining the roles given to African combatants and non-combatants during both world wars. Conversely, political conditions within the colonies affected the recruitment and employment of African military forces. Thus, it is not surprising that the British in Africa maintained a remarkably low level defense capability that had direct implications for the continent's international relations in the modern period. The dynamic nature of British colonial relationships and the absence of large standing armies made the management of violence and the projection of British political and military power within Africa also difficult to maintain in the twentieth century. The struggle between mother country and the colonies over the projection of power was affected by environmental, political, and economic constraints. However, social and ideological forces were perhaps equally responsible for the increasing dependence on European military structures and organizations within Africa.

According to Bethell Ogot, "The attitudes of the various nations towards warfare has affected the writing of history, in that the

²⁴Chester A. Crocker, "Military Dependence: the Colonial Legacy in Africa," JMAS, 12, 2 (1974), 265-86.

²⁵Phyllis M. Martin, "The Violence of Empire," in History of Central Africa, David Birmingham and Phyllis Martin, eds. (London and New York: Longman, 1983), 20.

²⁶According to Leonard Thompson, philosophy rarely determined events and administrators suffered from ethnocentrism and paternalism. France and Britain in Africa, Prosser Gifford and Wm. Roger Louis, eds. (Yale University Press, 1971).

historian becomes conscious of the need to demonstrate the military success of his nation. Taken to its absurd end, such an exercise leads to political propaganda and historical myths."²⁷ In moving away from such "propaganda" and "myths", I will examine some of the ideological constructs which made up European military attitudes: fear and uncertainty, the desire for control, "duty" and social obligations, and ethnocentrism and racism. All these were applied to the construction of British military policy throughout Africa prior to 1939.

²⁷Bethwell A. Ogot, ed. War and Society in Africa (London: Frank Cass & Company, 1974), 2.

I. The Employment of British Imperial Forces and the Conquest of Africa

During the later years of the nineteenth century, international relations were dominated by imperial priorities. A dominant idea of the age of imperialism was that the ascendant powers, as they had developed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, could maintain and demonstrate their great-power status only by expanding beyond their frontiers²⁸, especially overseas. The prevalence of this idea was obvious everywhere--in the press of that time, in scholarly debates, and in speeches of government policy-makers.

Probably the most virulent and historically the most far-reaching consequence of this idea was the growing glorification of war and the spreading notion of its inevitability. In 1899 the publicist, Harold F. Wyatt, described war as the only means which history had confirmed many times by which strong nations replaced the weaker ones. He wrote, "victory in war is the method by which, in the economy of God's providence the sound nation supersedes the unsound, because in our time such victory is the direct offspring of a higher efficiency, and the higher efficiency is the logical outcome of the higher morale."²⁹

In order to project British power, therefore, a strong military was essential. According to the American naval historian, Alfred Thayer Mahan, the most important ingredient of a strong military at the time was naval power. As other nations began to found overseas empires and stretch their commercial networks, Britain adopted the two-power standard: that in British naval strength there should be a margin of ten per cent over the joint battleship strength of the next two naval

²⁸The urge for unlimited expansion is the central thesis of Schumpeter's theory of imperialism applied to the whole history of mankind. Joseph Schumpeter, "The Sociology of Imperialism", in Imperialism. Social Classes Two Essays. Introduction by Bert Hoselitz. Transl. by Heinz Norden. (New York, 1955), 3-98.

²⁹Winifried Baumgart, Imperialism. The Idea and Reality of British and French Colonial Expansion, 1880-1914 Transl. Ben V. Mast (Oxford University Press, 1982), 88.

powers.³⁰ According to the historian A.P. Thornton, "the British Navy became the most formidable weapon in the imperialist armory precisely because the foes of imperialism never saw it as an instrument of imperialism at all. Naval officers, by the very nature of their service, were precluded from annexing large tracts of unproductive and hostile hinterland".³¹ The Treasury financially supported a strong navy because it was seen as more cost effective than a large standing army. Politicians viewed navy officers as less of a threat than army officers. Fathers and mothers wanted their sons to enlist in the navy; it was safer than the army.

Most supporters of imperial expansion, on the other hand, argued that overseas paramountcy required a strong national army but public opinion was hostile to military conscription at home. What, anyway-- Garnet Wolseley when Adjutant-General in 1888 had asked--was the British Army for?³² Thornton, in his study of colonial defense policy, argued that there was no clear definition of what land forces were responsible for in British national defense plans of the period.³³ Furthermore, in the late 19th century, the sources also suggest that military officials assumed that Great Britain would never have to undertake a war in the colonies except against "savages," and that the regular army would never have to fight for the British Empire.³⁴ Of course, the South African crisis which led to the Boer attack on British positions in December 1899, proved this view wrong. Because military doctrines on the employment of British land forces had not kept pace with the growth of the empire, for nearly forty years (1880-1914) manpower shortages plagued military commanders everywhere. Older strategies combined with

³⁰A.P. Thornton, The Imperial Idea and Its Enemies (New York: Anchor Books edition, 1968), 146. On Mahan and his doctrine, see Hanke, Mahan.

³¹Ibid., 146-47.

³²Ibid., 137.

³³Ibid., 147.

³⁴Ibid., 138. Wolseley had considerable experience with colonial wars in Africa.

new innovative methods of recruitment were instrumental in ensuring British military success in frontier wars.³⁵ For example, British infantry forces were systematically supplemented with Indian and other indigenous troops in conflict areas throughout the British empire.

The Indian Army throughout much of the nineteenth served as a sort of "imperial fire brigade" in both Asia and Africa³⁶, for it provided colonial garrisons and served as an enormous reservoir of men. Lord Salisbury remarked in 1882, that India was "an English barrack in the Oriental Seas from which we may draw any number of troops without paying for them."³⁷ Indian soldiers first fought outside India as early as 1792 when a force from Madras captured Manila in the Philippines. The most extensive use, however, of the Indian army as an "Imperial" force did not come until after the 1857 Mutiny, when the armies of the East India Company were reformed as "soldiers of the Queen", and from then until the war in 1914 they served in over a dozen different campaigns in places as far apart as China and Egypt.³⁸ For half a century the Royal Navy and the Indian Army--with the British Army intervening on specific occasions--defended and advanced British interests east of Suez.

The Indian Army was an all-volunteer force--conscription was never needed because soldiering was regarded as an honorable and profitable profession.³⁹ The rank and file consisted of mercenaries drawn from a great variety of ethnic groups--Rajputs, Jats, Sikhs, Gurkhas, and other

³⁵Lawrence James, The Savage Wars: British Campaigns in Africa, 1870-1920 (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985), chapter two.

³⁶David Killingray, "The Idea of a British Imperial African Army," JAH 20, 3 (1979): 421.

³⁷Sir Charles Lucas (ed.), The Empire at War Vol. I, (Royal Colonial Institute, 1921-6), 56-7. Classic 5 volume series on the expansion and defense of the British empire.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Byron Farwell, Armies of the Raj: From the Mutiny to Independence, 1858-1947 (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1989), 28. Old soldiers who retired to their villages with their pensions were admired and respected. During World War II, the Indian government was able to raise an army of more than two million men--the largest all-volunteer army in the history of the world.

"martial races."⁴⁰ What made the Indian Army tick was the sepoy's pride in his profession and in his regiment, and the mutual respect between British officers and their men.⁴¹ When the very best troops were required to defend the Empire, the request was often for "British or Gurkha." Although the Indian Army was composed of mercenaries, it was highly trained and formidable in combat.

The British Secretary of War, faced with reconciling the maintenance of increased imperial responsibilities with the demands of the Treasury, Parliament and the public, increasingly relied on Indian troops. By 1914 the Indian Army was regularly deployed for garrisons in Egypt, the Indian Ocean, Singapore, China and Africa which resulted in serious manpower shortages.⁴² In case Indian manpower resources might be completely exhausted, the War Office was also assiduously exploring the possibility of recruiting military forces in Africa.⁴³

The potential value of African manpower for imperial defense was clearly seen by some military advisors in the nineteenth century. Several officers in giving evidence to the Indian Army Reorganization Committee in 1859 suggested that African troops, as an alien force, would be more reliable in policing the sub-continent.⁴⁴ In the Franco-British negotiations over the division of the hinterland of West Africa

⁴⁰Stephen Cohen, The Indian Army: Its Contribution to the Development of a Nation (Oxford University Press, 1990), 45-49. The idea of a "martial race" was and is less a theory than a catch-all phrase which has been used to justify a wide range of opinions on inhabitants of India, and the best way to organize them into an army. Belief in the theory was not confined to India but Africa as well. The British found such classes easy to identify. Outlook and attitude towards soldiering were important criteria as well as loyalty. Of course, indigenous people supported these imperial stereotypes to their own advantage.

⁴¹Charles C. Trench, The Indian Army and the King's Enemies, 1900-1947 (GDR: Thames and Hudson, 1988), 15. This work provides an excellent discussion on Indian Army organization and its changing role in Imperial defense schemes.

⁴²Keith Jeffery, The British Army and the Crisis of Empire, 1918-22 (England: Manchester University Press, 1984), 2-3.

⁴³Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher, Africa and the Victorians: The Climax of Imperialism (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books edition, 1968), 13-14.

⁴⁴Killingray, "The Idea of a British Imperial African Army," 421.

in the 1890s, one concern of both powers was that the best military recruiting lands should not fall into the hands of the other.⁴⁵

Throughout most of the nineteenth century, the defense of local British interests on the West Coast of Africa depended on the Royal Navy, the West India Regiment--whose personnel were assumed to be more resistant to disease and cheaper to maintain than whites--and several small local forces.⁴⁶ These included the Lagos Constabulary, composed originally of freed "Hausa" slaves; the Sierra Leone Frontier Police, popularly known as the Frontiers, made up of Creoles, Mende, and Temne; and a constabulary raised by the Royal Niger Company.⁴⁷ In terms of size, none of these forces amounted to much: the Frontiers had only 17 officers, 23 NCOs, and 300 men.⁴⁸ Their military prestige was small, and their reputation among Africans as employers apparently left much to be desired.

In 1897 Joseph Chamberlain, then two years into his tenure as a Colonial Secretary, decided to put an end to this untidy arrangement. He took steps to raise a regular military force--the West African Frontier Force (WAFF). It was under the Command of Sir Frederick (later Lord) Lugard and its main mission was to stop the French Imperial advance on the Niger.⁴⁹ By 1901 the WAFF had become a federal inter-territorial force composed of the Nigeria Regiment, the Gold Coast Regiment, the Sierra Leone Battalion, and the small Gambia Company.⁵⁰ The WAFF was commanded by seconded British army officers assisted by a small number of British NCOs. The African rank and file were recruited

⁴⁵Ibid., 422.

⁴⁶Lewis Gann and Peter Duignan, Rulers of British Africa, 1870-1914 (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1978), 106.

⁴⁷Ibid. Other forces included the Niger Coast Constabulary, composed primarily of Yoruba and Ibo and formed in 1893 for the defense of the Oil Rivers Protectorate, and the Gold Coast Constabulary, set up in 1879 with an initial complement of 16 whites and 1,203 Africans.

⁴⁸Ibid., 107.

⁴⁹Anthony Clayton and David Killingray, Khaki and Blue: Military and Police in British Colonial Africa (Ohio University Press, 1989), 145.

⁵⁰Ibid.

mainly from northern or peripheral areas of each colony. They were non-literate mercenaries who were identified in the minds of their officers as "martial types."⁵¹ The WAFF became very skilled in bush warfare against local populations whose traditional weapons were little match for the colonial forces.

The major duty of the WAFF was to safeguard internal security. Operations to "pacify" the British West African colonies were completed by 1920. A number of small areas, principally in Nigeria, were still deemed not "opened up" by the late 1920s and military patrols continued to extend the British administrative fiat in operations similar to earlier campaigns. Given the WAFF's area of responsibility, its size was unimpressive. In 1901 the WAFF consisted of six battalions, divided into 45 companies.⁵² There were 159 British officers and 6,308 African other ranks.⁵³

Military developments in East Africa in some ways resembled those of West Africa. In the early stages of empire building, British leaders drew heavily on indigenous methods of organization and warfare. The first British-controlled force was called the Central Africa Rifles, later the Central Africa Regiment which was comprised of a few British officers and NCOs, Sikhs, and about 1,000 African askaris (professional fighting men), armed porters, and policemen.⁵⁴ In the stereotypes of the imperial mind, East Africa had its own "martial races" and askaris "simply loved being soldiers".⁵⁵

In 1902 three existing units--the Central Africa Regiment, the East Africa Rifles, and the Uganda Rifles--were amalgamated into a single

⁵¹For a comprehensive history of the WAFF see Colonel A. Haywood and Brigadier F.A.S. Clarke, The History of the Royal West African Frontier Force (Great Britain: Aldershot, 1964).

⁵²Gann and Duignan, The Rulers of British Africa, 107.

⁵³Haywood and Clarke, The History of the Royal West African Frontier Force, 37.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, 117.

⁵⁵I. Grahame, Jumbo Effendi: Seven Years with the King's African Rifles (London, 1966), 56.

regiment known as the King's African Rifles (KAR), which was responsible for the defense of British East Africa, Uganda, and the Central Africa Protectorate.⁵⁶ Initially, the force consisted of five battalions, with 35 companies in all, manned by 104 officers and 4,597 African other ranks.⁵⁷

Military conquest and "pacification" took a heavy toll on colonial forces and the local populations in East Africa. Punitive expeditions were launched against the Kikuyu after 1900. However, the most serious resistance came from the Nandi; conquest was a long-drawn-out and violent process. Colonel Meinertzhagen left a graphic account of a "small war" against the Nandi of Kenya in 1905-6. In a three-week campaign a force of about 1,100 King's African Rifles cost the Nandi 10,000 head of cattle, 6,000 sheep and goats, and 500 warriors killed; the number of wounded is unknown.⁵⁸ The total cost of military conquest was extensive. Porterage, the provision of carriers to the army, also took a heavy toll. The British admitted to using over 200,000 porters by 1917.⁵⁹

The last of the independent western Kenya peoples, the Gusii, were conquered in 1908; thereafter, reductions both in the numbers of imperial units and their size meant that in August 1914, when the East African campaign against the Germans began, only three battalions were in service.⁶⁰ It was not surprising, therefore, that in 1913 Colonel Thesiger, Inspector-General of the KAR, made an adverse report on the strength of the regiment stating that local forces would not be able to

⁵⁶Ibid., 120.

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸Richard Meinertzhagen, Kenya Diary, 1902-1906 (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1957), 265. Also John Lord, Duty Honour, Empire: The Life and Times of Colonel Richard Meinertzhagen, (New York: Random House, 1970).

⁵⁹Gann and Duignan, Rulers of British Africa, 149. The full story of the effects of porterage on African societies remains to be written, but it was an incredibly costly institution. Lettow-Vorbeck used tens of thousands of porters to defend German East Africa; deserters were shot.

⁶⁰Clayton, Khaki and Blue, 200.

stop an invasion of the East African Protectorate. H.J. Read, a Colonial Office official, did not take the situation seriously as reflected in his comments to the inspection report, "Rubbish--who is going to overrun E.A.?"⁶¹ This is an illuminating remark since it shows that the Colonial Office viewed the KAR as responsible for internal colonial matters rather than external threats. The KAR was to them a sort of military police force, for use in "semi-pacified" areas. Defense was a matter for the War Office, and for the Indian Government which would provide troops in case of need.

However, in much of Africa, colonial levies were sometimes used further afield in accordance with a "divide and rule" policy. Angolan troops were used in the 1880s against rebels in Mozambique. When the Italians attacked Ethiopia a large part of the army defeated at Adowa in 1896 was composed of men from Somalia. Britain used Sudanese troops extensively in field service. These are just a few examples. Here was the same process that India had gone through, a kind of snowballing through which a small investment of European manpower could yield large returns.⁶² In the British case, pressure from London usually meant that these forces were used on a limited basis because of the high cost of maintaining field armies⁶³, but Africans were employed more often as the colonial administration in India became stubborn about providing troops for overseas conflicts. During most of the 1880s, British international security interests were never seriously challenged in Africa. However, the Egyptian Crisis after 1876 and British efforts to incorporate the republican Boers in an imperial confederation were dangerous

⁶¹Geoffrey Hodges, The Carrier Corps: Military Labor in the East African Campaign, 1914-1918, (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 20.

⁶²V.G. Kiernan, "Colonial Africa and its Armies," War and Society: A Yearbook on Military History, Vol. 2 (London: Croom Helm Ltd., 1977), 27.

⁶³According to Colonel Rigby, commanding troops in Uganda, "an Indian soldier cost nearly half as much again as an African and needed four times as much baggage." African soldiers needed fewer carriers (sepoys required five or six each) and generally lived off the country. Hodges, The Carrier Corps, 20.

disturbances in regions vital to imperial security.

Perhaps the most serious crisis in Africa to challenge British defense policy prior to 1900 was the Anglo-Boer War. The Cape was vital for the survival and advancement of Britain's international maritime, commercial and imperial interests. Conflict between the British government and the Boers resulted over land, labor and racial issues. The upshot of the continual wrangling between the Boers and the British administration over these issues was a military confrontation. The War Office had no plan for an extended campaign in South Africa against Kruger's untrained Afrikaner forces.⁶⁴ Additionally, very few at home believed in the Boer "conspiracy" to obtain paramountcy in southern Africa. However, British military commanders in South Africa thought British politicians had underestimated both the Transvaalers' determination to sustain their independence and the military self-confidence they had gained through their victories over British forces in 1881.⁶⁵

General Wolseley was seriously concerned about British troop strength in South Africa and initially called for thirty-five thousand British reinforcements.⁶⁶ Military officers in the spring of 1899 had tried to warn the government that it was ill-prepared for war. General Butler, the C-in-C in South Africa, cabled the War Office:

Situation is not understood in England. In the event of a crisis, the situation will be more of a civil war than regular operations...believe war between white races coming as sequel to the Jameson Raid...would be greatest calamity that ever occurred.⁶⁷

The War Office, under the leadership of a civilian, decided to ignore Butler's warning. The British garrison in South Africa at the time was composed of ten thousand men, compared to the Boers estimated potential

⁶⁴Thomas Pakenham, The Boer War (NY: Random House, 1979), 68.

⁶⁵Leonard Thompson, A History of South Africa (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990), 140.

⁶⁶Ibid., 71.

⁶⁷Ibid.

forces of 53,700.⁶⁸ By war's end, 450,000 men in uniform served on the British side-365,000 British, 53,000 South African colonists, and 31,000 from Canada, Australia, and New Zealand.⁶⁹

Much can be learned of the nature of South African colonial society, which was later to influence policy in Botswana, by looking at the military organization of the Boer War. White discouragement of African military participation has been well documented. Both the Afrikaners and the British had potential African allies, even though the potentiality was infrequently tapped.⁷⁰ However, because large infantry forces need supply and logistical support, each army enrolled thousands of Africans as unarmed scouts, grooms, drivers, and (principally on the Boer side) the all-important diggers of trenches.⁷¹ Other Africans were later armed as the war dragged on and manpower shortages became acute.⁷² Peter Warwick has shown that "at least 10,000 and possibly as many as 30,000 Africans fought with the British army."⁷³ The Boers held the British at bay for two and a half years. It was obvious to military commanders and civilian planners alike that army doctrine needed revision.

Thus, the South African War proved a turning point in British defense thinking. The British were apprehensive about increasing

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹According to Sir Charles Lucas, the South African War stands out as the first war in the new British Empire in which the overseas peoples collaborated with the mother country on an appreciable scale, "the South African War was a pronouncement to an unfriendly and suspicious world that the British Empire was a single entity, a union in diversities, not an artificial and temporary combination, but a living body of many members." The Empire at War Vol I, 135.

⁷⁰Donald Denoon, "Participation in the 'Boer War': People's War, People's Non-War, or Non-People's War?" in War and Society in Africa Bethwell A. Ogot, ed. (Great Britain: Frank Cass & Company Ltd. 1974), 110.

⁷¹Pakenham, The Boer War, 424.

⁷²S. Horwitz, "The Non-European War Record in South Africa," in The Handbook on Race Relations in South Africa (NY: Octagon Books, 1975), 535. The Griqualand East Field Force consisted of 2,000 Mfengu. See also K.W. Grundy, Soldiers Without Politics: Blacks in the South African Armed Forces (California: University of California Press, 1983), 38.

⁷³Peter Warwick, Black People and the South African War, 1899-1902 (London: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 4-5.

tensions in Europe and maintaining the security of the empire. The "Committee of Imperial Defence" was formed and discussions were held with all the Dominions and colonies on their future defense roles. In 1911 the British Government issued the Stanhope Memorandum which belatedly laid out more clearly the role of the British home defense forces and expeditionary forces for imperial service.⁷⁴ In general, defense leaders called for greater colonial cooperation and encouraged the colonies to create and maintain "modest" imperial defense establishments for the purpose of coming to the aid of Great Britain in times of crisis.⁷⁵ The organization, composition, training, and funding for these armies were the sole responsibility of the colonies. In general, Africans were to be disarmed--some of them for the first time ever. Thus, in many respects, "the war between Boer and Briton marked a truce in the undeclared war between black and white: and the end of the white war was the end of that truce."⁷⁶

As the conquest period ended, "police forces" not armies were used to protect white citizens and prevent crime.⁷⁷ These loose amalgams of local militia and constabulary forces were not expected by British military planners to assume imperial defense roles.⁷⁸ Generally, colonial administrators had insufficient staff and military forces to establish law and order throughout their own countries. R. Meinhertzhausen, in his Kikuyu diary for 1902, recorded that

⁷⁴Crowder, Michael, The Cambridge History of the British Empire, Vol. VIII (Great Britain: Cambridge University Press, 1963), 763ff.

⁷⁵Ibid.

⁷⁶D. Denoon, "Participation in the 'Boer War'," 117. Denoon argues that "the South African War was a non-war, not only because the vast majority of the people were instructed (by both sides) not to participate, but also because the war could only be fought on condition that the convention was observed. The war was, therefore, fought during a truce in the enduring racial struggle," 120.

⁷⁷Killingray, Khaki and Blue, 4. The British concept of the "constable" is explained in this study. Constables were keepers of the Sovereign's Peace and also representatives of the local community. In Africa these forces were sometimes used in occasional deployments in gendarmerie and frontier military roles.

⁷⁸Crocker, "Military Dependence," 273.

administering and policing a district inhabited by half a million armed Africans was really quite "humorous".⁷⁹ Whenever possible, security commitments in the interior were avoided. The first Governor of German East Africa, Baron Von Soden, wrote, "the establishment of military stations is impossible without increased burden to the budget."⁸⁰ The Colonial Office refused to provide funds for increasing African military forces prior to World War I and the lack of vision and planning by the War Office for future conflicts resulted in force stagnation. Indigenous resources (black and white) were never maximized, thus, an imperial African army which could deal with internal and external threats to the empire never materialized.

II. External and Internal Factors Which Shaped British Policy Regarding African Soldiers

Historically, British colonial policy regarding the use of African soldiers for military defense was affected by several important factors: empire-builders like Sir Frederick Lugard contributed advice on how to maintain imperial superiority by building strong colonial armies; color prejudice was an issue that was seldom aired in public, but attitudes about dealing with "natives" certainly affected military policy over the years; international condemnation of using black troops in European quarrels grew after World War I and reinforced prevailing attitudes; and the lack of a coherent British strategic policy between the two world wars meant drastic reductions in military manpower everywhere and a rejection of the idea of a British imperial African Army. Each of these factors had a strong impact on the "official mind" of British imperial policy and eventually would alter the view of the function of the armed forces in colonial Africa.

Sir Frederick Lugard exercised a dominant influence over British

⁷⁹T.O. Ranger, "African Reaction to the Imposition of Colonial Rule in East and Central Africa" in Robert Collins, ed. Historical Problems of Imperial Africa (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1994), 75.

⁸⁰Ibid.

military policies in West and East Africa prior to 1939 because of his administrative system of "indirect rule".⁸¹ In theory, the "indirect rule" system of administration was based on an hierarchical system of authority which combined iron discipline, and Britain's own class system.⁸² Colonialism was, whether conscious or not, military in conception and organization. The chain of authority from the top downwards was untouched by any principle of representation or consultation. A Resident in a province supervised the district officers and political officers. They in turn worked with subordinate chiefs and district heads. Lugard believed that native authority should be maintained at the local level with limitations. One of those limitations had to do with the military:

Native rulers are not permitted to raise and control armed forces, or to grant permission to carry arms. To this in principle Great Britain stands pledged under the Brussels Act. The evils which result in Africa from an armed population were evident in Uganda before it fell under British control, and are very evident in Abyssinia today. No one with experience will deny the necessity of maintaining the strictest military discipline over armed forces or police in Africa if misuse of power is to be avoided, and they are not to become a menace and a terror to the native population and a danger in case of religious excitement-a discipline which an African ruler is incapable of appreciating or applying. For this reason native levies should never be employed in substitution for or in aid of troops. On the other hand, the government armed police are never quartered in native towns, where their presence would interfere with the authority of the chiefs. Like the regular troops, they are employed as escorts and on duty in the townships. The native administration maintain a police, who wear a uniform but do not carry firearms.⁸³

Lugard's system of indirect rule and military organization

⁸¹Owing to Lugard's reputation in East and West Africa, Mr. Joseph Chamberlain selected him as the best officer with Nigerian experience to raise a regular military force to counteract French influence in Niger territories. At the time, July 1897, Lugard was in the service of the South Africa Company. His intention had been to give up soldiering, so his first inclination was to refuse, but after further consideration, he decided to accept the appointment and returned to England to confer with the Colonial Office on measures required to implement it. A. Haywood & F. Clarke, History of the Royal West African Frontier Force, 31.

⁸²Ruth First, Power in Africa (New York: Pantheon Books, 1970), 30.

⁸³John Frederick Lugard, "Principles of Native Administration" in Robert Collins, Historical Problems of Imperial Africa, 114.

heavily influenced British policy regarding security issues in Africa.⁸⁴ Lugard's The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa (first printed in 1922), became the nearest thing to a Bible for administrative officers on the spot. One section titled "Armed Forces and their Employment" gave very specific guidelines on the military side of African administration which had a lasting impact. One of his maxims was to train enough men for military use, but no more than necessary; and to never demobilize any, if administrators wanted to avoid "the danger of flooding the country with men trained to arms and discipline."⁸⁵ The major concern of colonial administrators was to keep colonial armies small for security reasons and financially inexpensive.⁸⁶

Much greater, however, was Lugard's concern over the army's composition in an ethnically diverse colonial environment. His attitude reflects contemporary European perceptions of "tribal conflicts". "I am not in favor of tribal companies which leads to quarrels in barracks, but battalions or wings of battalions, composed of races which have no affinities with the population of the region in which they are serving, and even the introduction of an alien battalion may be a wise precaution," he wrote.⁸⁷ The WAFF and KAR as "regional" defense forces were established with this policy in mind. British "tribal" policies meant that armed forces in Africa were ethnically unrepresentative of their societies: some groups were significantly overrepresented, others clearly underrepresented. According to Claude Welch, "ethnic groups whose size, cohesiveness, and geographic placement made them minor threats to colonial rule enjoyed a sort of inside track for recruitment

⁸⁴Lord Lugard, The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa, Fifth edition. (Connecticut: The Shoe String Press, Inc., 1965), 574.

⁸⁵Ibid.

⁸⁶This is obviously a continuous concern for governments. The problem centers on maintaining effective armed forces on the tightest of budgets. According to Lugard in the Dual Mandate, "it was also more efficient to keep those already trained."

⁸⁷Ibid.

into colonial armed forces."⁸⁸ According to Cynthia Enloe, "this common pattern of recruitment in colonial Africa encouraged marginal ethnic groups to envision the military both as a vehicle for protecting communal interests and as a means for achieving social mobility."⁸⁹

The ideal of armed forces totally divorced from "political" involvement formed a cornerstone of the civil-military relations in the colonies. There were several strands in this argument, one involving officer recruitment and training, another focusing on the rank and file. A typical Lugardian army was a two-strata organization that consisted of an elite corps of Europeans as officers and NCOs at the top, and a mass of African recruits as infantrymen at the bottom. Not only was it Lugard's idea that this division of Europeans and Africans into officers and men should be a permanent, but fixed ratios were also established. In a colonial army, Lugard prescribed, "the proportion of Europeans should, I think, be less than 4 per cent in peace and 10 per cent or 12 per cent in action."⁹⁰

Closely related to these principles were the precautions that must be taken by colonial administrations to control the military. Soldiers were expected to perform fatigue work ("pioneer duties"), which limited free time and were considered a "valuable part of discipline".⁹¹ A major worry was the training in arms. The unspoken fear was always, "Won't they turn the guns on us?" The prevalent opinion was that martial skills ought to remain the exclusive purview of the whites, but it was not always practical. To "solve" the problem, Lugard recommended that arms should be stored in an arms house and placed under close

⁸⁸Claude E. Welch, Jr., "Ethnic Factors in African Armies," Ethnic and Racial Studies, Vol. 9 No. 3 (July 1986), 325. In theory an army should be a passive instrument in the hands of the government, an efficient agent to carry out the ends decreed by its political masters without sentiment or complaint.

⁸⁹Cynthia H. Enloe, "Ethnicity and the Myth of the Military in African Development," in Police, Military and Ethnicity: Foundations of State Power (New Brunswick & London: Transaction, Inc., 1980), 37.

⁹⁰Lugard, Dual Mandate, 575.

⁹¹Ibid.

supervision of British N.C.O.s and issued out to Africans when necessary. Control also involved the physical movement and economic freedom of soldiers. Lugard urged that a system of deferred pay should be used to check desertion and provide a method of saving for future family obligations.⁹² Soldiers with money were also considered a disruptive social force: they were unruly and disrupted good relations between the District Officer and chiefs. These Lugardian principles became the foundation of policy not only in those colonies in which Lugard had had direct dealing, namely Uganda and Nigeria, but also throughout much of Africa.⁹³

Colonial policy regarding African soldiers was also influenced by hardening European racial attitudes. The second half of the nineteenth century in particular witnessed the demise of liberal ideals such as the equality of man and the doctrine of inevitable progress. One important measure of this change was the spectacular explosion of biologically based racist attitudes.⁹⁴ In England, "the nineteenth century closed with racism firmly established in popular opinion and in science."⁹⁵

Social Darwinists, physical anthropologists and eugenic scientists all set themselves the task of classifying the world's races according to a natural hierarchy. The biological sciences in particular were of great importance in this process. Deeply embedded evolutionist assumptions together with the doctrine of the "survival of the fittest" came to be applied to the human situation. Biology, writes Greta Jones, helped to "create the kind of moral universe in which nature reflected

⁹²Ibid., 576.

⁹³For an interesting discussion on the incorporation of Lugardian principles by the French and Belgians see J. Bayo Adekunle, "Ethnicity and Army Recruitment in Colonial Plural Societies," Ethnic and Racial Studies, Vol. 2, No. 2 (April 1979): 159-161.

⁹⁴Thomas Carlyle, "Occasional Discourse on the Nigger Question" in Imperialism, Philip D. Curtin, ed. (NY: Harper and Row, 1971), 135. Carlyle writes about blacks from West India in very racist terms.

⁹⁵Saul Dubow, "Race, Civilisation and Culture: the Elaboration of Segregationist Discourse in the Inter-war Years," in The Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism in Twentieth Century South Africa Shula Marks and Stanley Trapido, eds. (England: Longman Group, 1987), 72.

society and vice versa".⁹⁶ Racial thought also drew heavily on the metaphor of the family, an "area where subordination was legitimized".⁹⁷ Imagery derived from the biological sciences and the family gave rise to ubiquitous notions of the "dependent" or "child races". In the imperial context, these doctrines were later transformed into conceptions of "separate development" and trusteeship".

The historical development of different racial theories cannot be included in this study, however, the influence of racial attitudes on colonial military policy is very important because, "colonial policy was greatly modified by the racial policy and racial attitude held by the colonizing power."⁹⁸ The very exercise of colonial administration was at the personal level unarguably an instance of race relations in action.⁹⁹ While being race conscious, most "enlightened" British administrators did not justify discrimination against another race; they gave their allegiance to the principle "that there should be no barrier of race, color, or creed which should prevent any man by merit from reaching any station if he is fitted for it," as Winston Churchill stated to the Conference of British Premiers in 1921. There was, of course, a great deal of variation in racial attitudes. The attitude of governors, administrators, and even of the lowest European subaltern had great bearing upon colonial relations. It should also be remembered that colonial policy, which was everywhere theoretically based on human rights and human dignity, was always subordinate to commercial interests and military exigencies.

Another prevalent attitude in the nineteenth century was the effect of environment on African capabilities. The nature of the country from which a man came was determined to have some influence upon

⁹⁶Ibid.

⁹⁷Ibid.

⁹⁸H.A. Wieschhoff, Colonial Policies in Africa, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1944), 27.

⁹⁹Ibid.

his fighting qualities and national character (another version of the "martial races" theory). Samuel Baker found that:

the lowest, the most cowardly and most animal races, are the denizens of the vast, flat, swampy districts. They are the least warlike, and when approached take refuge under cover of the very high reeds and gigantic vegetation with which their country is covered. On the other hand, the great pastoral tribes are almost always brave and accustomed to war, through their recurring quarrels with those around them.¹⁰⁰

The impact of environment on racial development was hotly debated. One of the prevailing attitudes on recruitment in 1939 was that "tropical Africans" were unsuited for duty in Europe because they did not have the physical stamina to perform military duties in Europe's harsh climatic conditions.¹⁰¹ Associated with environmental determinism is the concept of "tribalism." Leroy Vail argues that "ethnicity is a consciously crafted ideological creation and there are issues (usually access to resources) that are at the heart of ethnic consciousness."¹⁰² Military commanders and colonial administrators were often "culture brokers" who defined the military capabilities of certain groups as "martial races." Africans capitalized on these "traditional" cultural traits, as perceived by Europeans, in order to find employment within colonial military forces.¹⁰³ British attitudes about race affected military

¹⁰⁰Major General Woseley, "The Negro as a Soldier," Fortnightly Review, No. CCLXIV. (1 December 1888), 699.

¹⁰¹According to Myron Echenberg, *Tirailleurs Senegalais* soldiers did not do well in cold climates because of frostbite. The French command adopted a practice known as *hivernage* (a French term for winter season in West Africa). It involved the transfer of black units from the front to southern France at the beginning of each winter. Colonial Conscripts: The Tirailleurs Senegalais in French West Africa (NH: Heinemann, 1991), 35.

¹⁰²Leroy Vail, The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa, Leroy Vail, ed. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989), 7.

¹⁰³For a thorough discussion on the invention of tradition, see Terence Ranger, "The Invention of Tradition in Colonial Africa," in The Invention of Tradition, E. Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds. (Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 211-262. Ranger reveals that "the transmission of European neo-traditions to Africa stressed ruling class qualities and occupations of whites participating in the colonial experience." This certainly was true regarding military traditions. Africans within the colonial forces were trained in the British arts of war.

policy in various ways but one good example is the prevalent attitude that Blacks were "not capable of holding any higher rank in His Majesty's forces than that of a warrant officer or non-commissioned officer".¹⁰⁴ A King's Commission was reserved exclusively for those who were white. Another aspect of race and policy focused on the "moral effect" of mixing Africans in European quarrels. According to Hector Duff, "until the War of 1914-1918 the tribes of tropical Africa had been accustomed to look on all white men as members of one great family, differing in certain respects as among themselves, but solidly united as against other races".¹⁰⁵ And then, all of a sudden, the image changed as the European powers fought amongst themselves, and not only that, but turned to Africans for assistance in the fray.¹⁰⁶

III. British Policy During The World Wars

During World War I in East Africa, British objectives in Africa remained minimal--to neutralize German power and to contain the costs of war in Africa. In 1914, King George gave this message to his troops going to war, "You are leaving home to fight for the safety and honour of my Empire."¹⁰⁷ The Great War embroiled Africa as well as Europe, and, it placed European and African together on both sides--a disagreeable surprise to "those who said that hostilities would be confined to Europe, and that war between two white races in a black man's country was unthinkable".¹⁰⁸ Even more unthinkable to British

¹⁰⁴David Killingray, "Race and Rank in the British Army in the Twentieth Century," in Ethnic and Racial Studies, Vol. 10, No. 3 (July 1987), 277.

¹⁰⁵Hector Duff, "White Men's Wars in Black Men's Countries," in The National Review, Vol. 84 (London, 1925), 903.

¹⁰⁶Myron Echenberg discusses the change in African attitudes at Verdun, Ypres, and Chemin-des-Dames in WWI when nearly a million men were wounded on the battlefields. Colonial Conscripts, 36-38.

¹⁰⁷Captain Cecil Battine, A Military History of the War From the Declaration of War to the Close of the Campaign of August 1914 (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1916), 280.

¹⁰⁸Melvin Page, "Black Men in a White Men's War," in Africa and the First World War, Melvin Page, ed. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987), 1-4. According to Page, there was never really any question but that Africa, and Africans, would be drawn into the war. The French military command clearly had made plans for the rapid deployment of African

planners at the time, was the concept of using African soldiers in the European theater of war. If African troops had any role to play, it was strictly to relieve French soldiers as garrison troops in North Africa so that European units could cross over into Europe. However, some Allied commanders quickly realized every imperial resource would be needed to combat the German threat: the Tirailleurs Senegalais were in Belgium in the opening stages of the war in 1914.¹⁰⁹

The most outspoken advocate for the use of colonial manpower was the French Colonel Mangin who had spent many years in Africa. In 1910 he wrote a book, La Force Noire, which made a strong impression on military minds in Britain and France. Because of his influence, the French continued to build the Tirailleurs Senegalais in West Africa.¹¹⁰ When war broke out in 1914, the French were the first to build up their colonial forces aggressively; wartime recruitment in the French colonies was "conducted by coercive methods reminiscent of the repudiated era of the slave trade".¹¹¹ During World War I, these soldiers made a very significant contribution, with some 180,000 Senegalese, 175,000 Algerians, 50,000 Tunisians, 40,000 Malagaches, 34,000 Moroccans, and 2,000 Somalis serving.¹¹² Empire proved an asset, instead of a liability, to French national defense.

However, most British commanders were against using African troops and labor outside Africa. Churchill, a forceful advocate in the Government for the use of African troops and labor worldwide, commented

troops in Europe.

¹⁰⁹Myron Echenberg, Colonial Conscripts, 34.

¹¹⁰Kiernan, "Colonial Africa and its Armies," 28.

¹¹¹Echenberg, Colonial Conscripts, 43. The Tirailleur Senegalais was unique in the colonial experience of the Western powers in Africa. Only France brought about an intense militarization of its African colonies and instituted universal male conscription in peace as well as in war from 1912 until 1960.

¹¹²Warren Young, Minorities in the Military: A Cross-National Study in World Perspective (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1982), 151. All in all, France drew almost 545,000 troops and over 220,000 laborers from its African colonies and protectorates. The magnitude of their contribution may be seen in that African casualties equalled that of the United States and Belgium combined.

that the lack of interest in using African manpower was "discouraging, and I cannot feel convinced that it is conclusive".¹¹³ He was right. By late 1915 the war had begun to place a heavy burden on the manpower resources of Britain and India. Canada and the other Dominions were recruiting¹¹⁴ but a larger emergency army was needed. The African campaigns proved to be more protracted than expected. Indian troops employed in the fighting in East Africa fell sick in large numbers; those who remained were urgently needed for Indian security and the Middle East campaigns.¹¹⁵ Proposals for using the "massive" military potential of black African manpower began to emerge. In October 1916, Major Darnley-Stuart Stephens published an article in the English Review entitled "Our Million Black Army." In the article, Stephens (a former commander of the Lagos Battalion in 1882) claimed that he personally would be willing to undertake recruiting in West Africa, maintaining that he could raise a force of some 20,000 in only two months.¹¹⁶ Stephens also called for recruitment in South Africa and the Sudan, arguing that half a million men could be raised and thrown on to the Western Front in about nine months.¹¹⁷ Faced with these pressures, in July 1916 the British War Office set up a committee to discuss utilizing the military resources of the African dependencies in other theaters.

The Colonial Office and the War Cabinet rejected the incorporation of black combatants in British Divisions deployed in Europe for several reasons. African soldiers had lower levels of training, and there was

¹¹³Killingray, "The Idea of a British Imperial African Army," 424. The Colonial Office was approached in 1915 with a proposal to recruit West African miners for the Western Front but the idea was rejected outright. Recruiting non-combatant labor for Europe from South Africa was a different matter. Recruiting for the Native Labour Contingent began in 1916.

¹¹⁴Although the direction of high military policy and strategy was centralized in the British War Office, dominion troops were organized in autonomous units and served with, rather than in, the British army. Richard Preston, Canada and Imperial Defense (Duke University Press, 1967), 469.

¹¹⁵Killingray, "The Idea of a British Imperial African Army," 423.

¹¹⁶Young, Minorities in the Military, 149.

¹¹⁷Ibid.

always the difficulty in obtaining white officers and NCOs (noncommissioned officers) with the appropriate language and cultural backgrounds to lead colonial soldiers effectively. There was also a widespread aversion to the employment of colonials in positions of authority over Europeans, "a dangerous precedent for a European imperial power ruling over millions of African and Asian subjects."¹¹⁸ And, as one official noted, "African troops were mercenaries who fought for money and therefore had to be used carefully," thus implying Africans were perhaps not identifying with the goals of British nationalism in the war.¹¹⁹ Despite the objections of using black combatants in Europe, the British used them in African campaigns.

After brief military operations against the Germans in Togo and South West Africa, Britain reluctantly began to use West African troops in the East African campaign in mid-1916. Recruitment drives were organized and colonial authorities worked with chiefs to entice men to volunteer; unlike French colonies, conscription was usually not used.¹²⁰ However, facing military demands for more and more manpower, colonial officials often resorted to questionable techniques in their recruitment tactics. Deception was common. Europeans frequently misled Africans about the violence of the war. "Many people were dying, but they used to speak in such a way as if nobody was dying in the war", an East African veteran complained bitterly; therefore, he recalled, "many people went to fight" believing theirs would be an easy task.¹²¹

The campaign in East Africa resembled, more than any other on the continent, the war in Europe. First, there was its length. Given the delayed surrender of the German forces it was, by a day or so, the

¹¹⁸Hector Duff, "White Men's Wars in Black Men's Countries," in The National Review, 84 (London, 1925), 902-11.

¹¹⁹Killingray, "The Idea of a British Imperial African Army," 425-426.

¹²⁰In the British East Africa Protectorate (now Kenya), the Native Followers' Recruitment Ordinance of 1915 established conscription of African males for the carrier corps.

¹²¹Page, "Black Men in a White Man's War," 6.

longest campaign of the entire war. Also, more than anywhere else in Africa, the modern machines of war--trucks, airplanes (although not tanks)--became almost regular features of combat. Most important, however, was the great diversity of the participants. More Europeans fought in East Africa than in any other African theater of the war. Most of them were English or South African, but they included also a few Belgians, Germans, Portuguese, and an occasional American, the latter usually joining the famous Legion of Frontiersmen recruited in Nairobi from the ranks of Africa's white hunters, explorers, and adventurers.¹²² Indian troops were also used. The bulk of the campaign, however, was born by African askari and the Carrier Corps (CC). The KAR took on almost all of the fighting during the last two years of the campaign as first Europeans, then South Africans and Indians, were withdrawn for service in other theaters.¹²³

The number of African war-related deaths was high, but any statistical summary of African participation must be in the nature of an educated guess. Melvin Page puts the figure at around 250,000 including those who lost their lives in Europe, the Middle East, and the various African campaigns.¹²⁴ After the war, African soldiers who served with the British were demobilized with a minimum of recognition and benefits. African military achievements in the First World War were highly praised by some, but more often opinions emphasized the negative aspects of African service. Opponents of the Black Army argued that African soldiers were undisciplined, unreliable, and essentially ineffective elements in the war effort. Despite the fact that Britain's military

¹²²Ibid., 12.

¹²³After 1917 there was a severe labor shortage in East Africa as recruiters competed for the KAR and carrier corps which resulted in the conscription of practically every able-bodied man who was not in regular employ. The depletion of manpower was affecting normal village life; cultivation decreased and famine occurred in November 1917. Donald C. Savage and J. Forbes Munru, "Carrier Corps Recruitment in British E. Africa," in JAH, VII, 2 (1966), 335-339.

¹²⁴Page, "Black Men in a White Man's War," 14.

strength was dependent on colonial manpower during the war, policy changes regarding African soldiers were slow to emerge. The degree to which Africa fitted into British defense plans depended on specific geographic threats and functional missions and roles which were considered acceptable to British military planners. Defense policy and modes of military organization were derived from the international fortunes of Britain in world politics, as well as from the pressures and constraints of colonialism in Africa. The war did have an impact on race and ideology, however, as postwar Europe reacted to the use of French African soldiers in peacetime.

After the war was over, French colonial soldiers remained as part of the occupation forces in the Rhineland. Germany was outraged and a massive propaganda campaign was launched to discredit France for its use of "The Black Force" and actively fought against it. In April 1919, the instructions given the German delegation to Versailles specified that "coloured troops should not be made a part of the army of occupation,"¹²⁵ and in June the German negotiators included this statement in their protests regarding the treaty,¹²⁶ hoping to make it more "difficult for our enemies...to bombard us and then send in their black troops."¹²⁷

But the French were not to be deterred. Despite German objections, they had sent their colonial veterans into the Rhineland; and despite Anglo-American concern and German agitation, they continued to keep them there.¹²⁸ This became a period of extreme national humiliation for Germany. The British were also very worried over the possible ramifications of such a policy. E.D. Morel, although a well known British radical and long-time crusader in African affairs,

¹²⁵Alma Marie Luckau, The German Delegation at the Paris Peace Conference (New York: Columbia University Press, 1941), 199-202.

¹²⁶Ibid., 374-76.

¹²⁷Ibid., 115.

¹²⁸Keith Nelson, "Black Horror on the Rhine: Race as a Factor in Post-World War I Diplomacy," in Journal of Modern History, 42, (1970), 610. Nelson estimates that between 42,000 and 45,000 colonials were used between 1920-21.

nevertheless displayed the prejudice of many contemporaries in a letter to the Nation about those who "thrust barbarians--barbarians belonging to a race inspired by Nature...with tremendous sexual instincts--into the heart of Europe."¹²⁹ Thus the outrage was extended beyond the conscription of black soldiers trained in modern weapons sent to kill white men; the new fear was of African soldiers with free access to white women. Specific incidents involving Africans engaged in rape, assault, and the spreading of disease were highlighted in press articles:

Black troops cannot be confined to barracks any more than white troops can be, and we know what black troops roaming the countryside must mean. The concentration of masses of black troops in towns means that brothels must be provided...¹³⁰

The Reichstag and the German Ministry of the Interior presented statistics on the occupation which emphasized the number and cost of maintaining brothels for the colored troops.¹³¹

As stated, the campaign against the use of African troops in Europe had some influence on British foreign policy. The Foreign Office was aware that the French use of colonial troops had aroused resentment in the Rhineland and that Morel was influential for foreign and domestic protests over the issue. Lloyd George in a secret session with Allied representatives stated that he was not opposed to African soldiers as such, since Britain had "gallant black troops" in the war, but he could understand German feelings about the issue and, he could imagine the

¹²⁹E.D. Morel, "The Employment of Black Troops in Europe," in Nation (London) (March 27, 1920), 893. For more information see A.J.P. Taylor, The Trouble Makers: Dissent over Foreign Policy, 1792-1939 (Bloomington, Indiana., 1958), 132-66. Also Robert C. Reinders, "Racialism on the Left: E.D. Morel and the 'Black Horror on the Rhine,'" in International Review of Social History, 13 (1968), 1-28.

¹³⁰Morel, "The Employment of Black Troops in Europe," 892.

¹³¹*Ibid.*, 619. Brothels for black and white French soldiers, about which Morel complained were in almost all cases operated as highly successful business by German local governments. See also Robert C. Reinders, "Racialism on the Left," 20.

attitude in England if it had been occupied by German African regiments.¹³² Despite the fact that British officials were sympathetic about the issue, little could be done to stop the French.¹³³ Bonar Law said that it was not the duty of His Majesty's Government or Parliament "to judge the action of another Government".¹³⁴

Although British policy makers decided to avoid direct confrontation over the issue of African troops in Europe, the lesson remained clear, the French suffered international condemnation over their use. The Treaty of Versailles forced Germany to relinquish all rights to its overseas possessions and now its status as a colonial power was further ridiculed by garrisons of French black troops. The campaign effectively whipped up British public opinion¹³⁵ and military advisers in the Colonial Office remained staunch enemies of using colonial troops outside Africa.

Despite stiff opposition, the issue remained in the forefront of public debate. In the issue of February-November 1918, devoted to the British army after the war, the Journal of the Royal United Services Institution published a paper by Capt. J.F. W. Allen entitled "An African Army: Some Possibilities." In this paper, Allen dealt with the feasibility of a "black phalanx" of African troops, listing a series of concrete proposals, but also criticizing those who had thought that such a force could have been raised during the war in the same proportion to

¹³²Reinders, "Racialism on the Left," 24. French government officials including Millerand stated that it was up to the military on how to employ black troops.

¹³³James Ramsey MacDonald supposedly approached the French Premier Eduard Herriot about removing colonial soldiers from the occupied zone. The French refused. Hugh F. Spender, "The Rhineland Amnesty", in Foreign Affairs, VI (November, 1924), 94.

¹³⁴Reinders, "Racialism on the Left," 10. Bonar Law was Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons.

¹³⁵Various women trade union and political societies including the British Section of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and the Fabian Women's Group became very active in the campaign. Resolutions dealing with the black troop issue were passed by Labour Party, ILP, trade unionists and members of Parliament. Newspapers and periodicals such as the Daily Herald, Morning Post, Foreign Affairs, and The Labour Leader all printed articles.

the African population under British rule as the military participation ratio in Great Britain itself.¹³⁶ The reason for this, according to Allen, was the fact that "nearly every trained African soldier was desperately needed in the firing line, and officers and NCOs competent to train recruits, and who could be spared for the work, were very few and far between." But "as to the future, there is no doubt we could raise and maintain from Africa a standing army of considerably larger size than we now have."¹³⁷ He argued further that the main role for African troops would be to release white soldiers from garrison duty, thus releasing them for infantry duty. Allen also addressed the question of officers and NCOs for the postwar African army. He proposed that British officers and NCOs should be assigned on secondment from British regiments for a specified period (similar to the system used in India) to provide leadership.¹³⁸ Despite these valiant efforts, the British War Office remained intractable on the issue of creating a black African imperial army.

Nevertheless, from the experience of the First World War, it was becoming increasingly evident that ensuring Britain's global status would require greater attention to military manpower issues, especially for strategically important territories and naval or military bases.¹³⁹ However, most historians agree that Great Britain between the wars lacked any grand imperial strategy to carry out its defense goals. Churchill protested that the "whole effort of the administrative branches of the War Office is concentrated upon the problem of demobilizing the Army in all parts of the world, and reducing it down to the lowest level compatible with the safe and efficient discharge of the

¹³⁶Young, Minorities and the Military, 152. Following summary of J.F.W. Allen's article was taken from this secondary source.

¹³⁷Ibid.

¹³⁸Ibid.

¹³⁹Anthony Clayton, The British Empire as a Superpower, 1919-1939 (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1986), 2-3.

obligations laid upon us by State policy.¹⁴⁰ In 1923, a Chief of Staff Committee was formed to examine interservice rivalries and coordinate defense programs for the empire.¹⁴¹ The Committee of Imperial Defence (CID), an advisory body only with no capacity for the formulation of any grand imperial strategy, suggested that a "coordinated command" was needed in peacetime as a preparation of war. The Imperial Defence College for senior officers continued to emphasize the preservation of the empire and how to maintain internal colonial security. However, these recommendations were never acted upon by military planners.

During the 1920s and 1930s, the African colonial forces (ACF) were reduced in size and in a poor state of equipment and training. Yet at the same time Africa became more significant in British defense thinking, due to the growth of Egyptian and Indian nationalism, the increasing importance of Middle Eastern oil and thus Suez, and the threats of Italian belligerency.¹⁴² There were strong differences in attitude between the War Office and the Colonial Office about imperial defense requirements in Africa. The War Office had a global perspective of imperial defense needs and proposed that they should control the ACF. The Colonial Office, concerned mainly with limited finance, held to the view that the primary role of the ACF was internal security. Largely due to the efforts of Lt. Col George Giffard, the Inspector General ACF, differences were worked out and African colonial defense was more closely coordinated with imperial defense after 1936.¹⁴³ Agreement had been reached that, in an emergency, control of the ACF would pass to the War Office.

British defense policy prior to the Second World War was based on several assumptions. First among these was that the possession of great

¹⁴⁰Jeffery, The British Army and the Crisis of Empire, 46.

¹⁴¹Clayton, The British Empire as a Superpower, 19.

¹⁴²Killingray, "The Idea of a British Imperial African Army," 430.

¹⁴³Ibid., 430-431.

national power would itself deter aggression.¹⁴⁴ However, British weaknesses were exposed in 1935-36 when no action was taken against Italy after the invasion of Ethiopia. Another prevalent idea was that actions taken by other powers to maintain their "strategic needs" should not worry British policy makers unless it challenged directly British interests, as in the invasion of British territory. Capt Liddell Hart expressed concern over what he called the growing evils of pacifism:

The British policy of not looking far ahead has advantages. It enables adaptability to circumstances. It is very disconcerting to foreign designs. But it is also awkward to ourselves. It draws us into many difficulties which might have been avoided. And into them, unprepared to meet them. Not only politically but militarily.¹⁴⁵

As early as April 1919, Sir Henry Wilson wrote a paper for the War Cabinet entitled 'The military situation throughout the British empire, with special reference to the inadequacy of the numbers of troops available' and this may be taken to be the maxim which the Chief of the Imperial Staff (CIGS) was unwillingly obliged to adopt in his continuous review of Imperial defense. In a minute covering a very long and disquieting memorandum by the General Staff on 'British military liabilities' in June 1920, Wilson wrote: "I would respectfully urge that the earnest attention of His Majesty's Government may be given to this question with a view to our policy being brought into some relation with the military forces available to support it".¹⁴⁶ Wilson argued that military recruitment should continue because at the current strength there was no margin for unforeseen contingencies. It was this perilous state of affairs which Wilson described to Lloyd George as "the dangerously weak and narrow margin of troops on which we are running the empire".¹⁴⁷

With the army stretched as it was, Wilson was compelled to rank the

¹⁴⁴Norman Angell, The Defence of the Empire (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company Inc., 1937), 62.

¹⁴⁵Ibid., 127.

¹⁴⁶Jefferys, The British Army and Crisis of Empire, 49.

¹⁴⁷Ibid., 50.

problems of imperial defense in order of priority. At the top of his list were the "main base" of the empire: Great Britain and Ireland in the west and India in the east - "on their stability depends the whole political, economic and military structure of the Empire".¹⁴⁸ Next in importance was Egypt, "the Clapham Junction" of Imperial communications, and the chief connecting link between the two main bases.¹⁴⁹ Wilson believed that the only way to save the Empire was to withdraw "from anything which costs money and is not absolutely vital to the safety of the Empire".¹⁵⁰ The scarcity of military resources would continue to plague Great Britain during the interwar years. As crisis after crisis broke out first in Ireland and then India, Egypt, Persia and Mesopotamia and the Far East, military resources were practically exhausted.

All was not well in Europe either. The Defence Requirements Committee (DRC) argued that Germany was the most dangerous potential enemy against whom defense preparations should be directed.¹⁵¹ Realizing the need for a larger Field Force in case of a continental war, the Army cried for additional money and manpower. Neither the politicians nor the general public were ready to believe that Germany would launch an offensive in Western Europe. For obvious reasons few serving officers were prepared to advocate publicly the preparation for total war with its logical concomitant of conscription.¹⁵² In January 1936 Colonel Pownall recognized the threat which the Government proved unwilling to recognize until almost the eve of the Second World War:

There was a further and most dangerous heresy-the Chancellor's. That of 'limited liability' in a war. They cannot or will not realise that if war with Germany comes again (whether by Collective Security, Locarno or any other way) we shall again be *fighting for our lives*. Our effort must be maximum, by land, sea and air.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁸Ibid.

¹⁴⁹Ibid.

¹⁵⁰Ibid., 51.

¹⁵¹Brian Bond, British Military Policy Between the Two World Wars (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), 210.

¹⁵²Ibid., 217.

¹⁵³Ibid., 218.

By 1938 Chamberlain was pushed inexorably towards the introduction of compulsory military service despite repeated declarations that he would never do so in peacetime. The British Government belatedly began preparations for a European war as tensions increased from April-September 1939 in Europe and Anglo-French relations became closer. Once the British Government had definitely accepted a continental commitment, determined efforts were made to coordinate detailed arrangements with France. Simultaneously there was a hectic, and even desperate, endeavor to prepare the greatly expanded Army for its more onerous European role. However, the British Army was in a profound state of disarray caused by the sudden changes which had been imposed upon its size, organization and priorities. It was obvious that no amount of hard work and improvisation could equip and train a Field Force for a major war in 1939, or even perhaps in 1940. Once again Great Britain could not possibly defend its strategic interests without recruiting massive military forces from the Dominions, India and other colonial possessions.

Chapter Two: Great Britain, South Africa and Bechuanaland: A Unique Historical Tripartite Relationship

Overview:

Bechuanaland (present day Botswana) was the most neglected and least developed European Protectorate in southern Africa prior to 1900. The British Government had taken little notice of Bechuanaland until 1884 when British paramountcy in southern Africa was directly challenged by the Germans, the Boers, and Portugal looking for new colonial possessions. In order to secure British strategic interests at the Cape peninsula, the imperial government was forced to take an interest in the remote interior regions of southern Africa.¹ However, British policy regarding Bechuanaland was driven by several other factors which were often in conflict. The need for economy was, for example, a strong motivation for the British Treasury, which in turn, affected actions by the Colonial Office. The Colonial Office thus wanted to avoid any new costly responsibilities in Bechuanaland; even annexation was resisted. It was also considered important to British imperialists to "stabilize" the region, support white settlement, and protect the indigenous peoples.² However, once British "protection" was granted to Bechuanaland in 1885, the ideal of "imperial supremacy on the cheap" became the dominant concern.

British policy in Bechuanaland was also shaped by local conditions. The BaTswana chiefs shrewdly manipulated imperial "protection" to their own advantage while striving to maintain their autonomy. Three principal chiefs-Khama III of the BaNgwato, Sechele I and his son Sebele of the BaKwena, and Bathoen I of the BaNgwaketse, consistently resisted Boer penetration, concessionary incursions by the British South Africa Company (BSAC), and interference in domestic

¹Robinson and Gallagher, Africa and the Victorians, 53.

²Paul Maylam, Rhodes, the Tswana, and the British: Colonialism, Collaboration, and Conflict in the Bechuanaland Protectorate, 1885-1899 (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1980), 31.

affairs.³ Because of negotiations by these local leaders and the missionaries with the imperial authorities in London, Bechuanaland was saved from outright incorporation into South Africa by becoming a Protectorate in 1889 thus remaining under British rule.

The British Colonial Office did not have the funds nor the personnel to exercise firm control over administrators in southern Africa, however. Bechuanaland was considered an imperial outpost not worthy of its own High Commissioner and was administered through the British High Commissioner in South Africa stationed at the Cape. Since the British High Commissioner was also Governor-General of the Union of South Africa until 1934 (and the Union's British ambassador thereafter), the Protectorate was closely tied to British interests in relation to South Africa.⁴ Thus, political, economic, social and military developments in Bechuanaland throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were highly influenced by its southern neighbor.

Prior to 1900, local forces contributed manpower to patrol Bechuanaland borders and to supplement British military forces in South Africa. Defense plans focused on two outside threats: the AmaNdebele to the northeast and the Boers to the southeast. Because of the desire for economy, no imperial forces were assigned to protect official Bechuanaland interests. A quasi-military organization recruited in South Africa, the Bechuanaland Border Police, assumed responsibility not only for the defense of the Protectorate but also for its early administration.

³Tswana chiefs exerted great influence on events during the colonial period. Khama III has been depicted as a "collaborator" because he often cooperated with the British, but at the same time as a resistance leader when his autonomy was threatened. Q.N. Parsons, "The Image" of Khama the Great," in Botswana Notes and Records 3 (1971), 41-59. Sechele opposed and actively resisted colonial interference in his affairs. Ramsay, "Rise and Fall of the Bakwena Dynasty of south-central Botswana, 1820-1940" (Ph.D. dissertation, Boston University, 1981).

⁴There were three "territories" or "protectorates" administered from the Cape. They are referred to as the High Commissioned Territories (HCT) and include Bechuanaland, Lesotho and Swaziland.

In the 1890s, the greatest threat to BaTswana independence did not come from foreign armed invasions, but from commercial concessionary companies. Following the declaration of the Protectorate, and especially after the discovery of gold at the Witwatersrand, concessionaires were everywhere in Bechuanaland looking for economic opportunities. Rhodes and his British South Africa Company (BSAC) posed the greatest threat since they desired to annex the Protectorate to build a railway, exploit its minerals and settle Europeans on BaTswana agricultural lands. Rhodes petitioned the British government to transfer all responsibilities for the Protectorate to his company. Because of his duplicity in the planned invasion of the South African Republic in December 1895 (commonly known as the Jameson Raid), his dreams of annexing the Protectorate were foiled.

At the turn of the century, the Bechuanaland Protectorate had survived Boer incursions, wars with the AmaNdebele and efforts of the BSAC to annex its territory. As the British consolidated their hold on the region, colonial administrative systems supplanted local political structures. However, the voices of visionary BaTswana leaders were never silenced and their presence was felt in the shaping of the Bechuanaland Protectorate. Historically, the unique tripartite relationship between Great Britain, South Africa, and Bechuanaland affected every aspect of life, including the organization, recruitment and employment of African soldiers in the late nineteenth century and after. Understanding the connections of physical geography, ethnic structures, economic links, and early colonial conflicts involving Bechuanaland and South Africa prior to World War One provides the historical context in which to understand British military policy and growing African resistance to certain arbitrary measures regarding war and BaTswana society in later years.

By moving from a broad treatment of British policy to the more specific, I build a greater understanding of British colonial

administration as it pertains to military defense. My case study of the Bechuanaland Pioneers and Gunners in the Second World War reflects many of the same ideas, stereotypes, and controversies which plagued British administrators and military commanders regarding the organization, training, and employment of "coloured" soldiers in the colonial context around the globe. However, British policies in southern Africa were also influenced by the historical evolution of a colonial racist culture unique within the empire.

I. The Socioeconomic and Early Historical Background of the Bechuanaland Protectorate

There is a strong case for arguing that geographic conditions affected the historical evolution of southern Africa. Present day Botswana is located at the center of southern Africa. It is bordered on the south by the Republic of South Africa, on the west and northwest by Namibia, on the north by Zambia at a point in the middle of the Zambezi River, and on the northeast by Zimbabwe. The nearest coast is about 500 kilometers distant. Although approximately the same size as France or the state of Texas (222,000 square miles),⁵ Botswana is sparsely populated. The most recent census (1981) reported a total of 1,005,300, of whom 938,000 were resident citizens and 25,000 non-resident citizens.⁶ The average population density, at 4.3 persons per square mile, is one of the lowest in the world. The great majority of Botswana's population is concentrated in the eastern third of the country, in the catchment area of the Limpopo River.

Botswana's climate is generally semi-arid and prone to cycles of prolonged drought. Arid conditions, sometimes severe, are a major impediment to development in almost all areas of economic activity. Rainfall ranges from a high of 27 inches in the east to a low of 8 inches a year in the west.⁷ The hottest months of the year are December, January and February and rain is most likely to occur between September and April. Winter starts in May and frost conditions are possible at night.

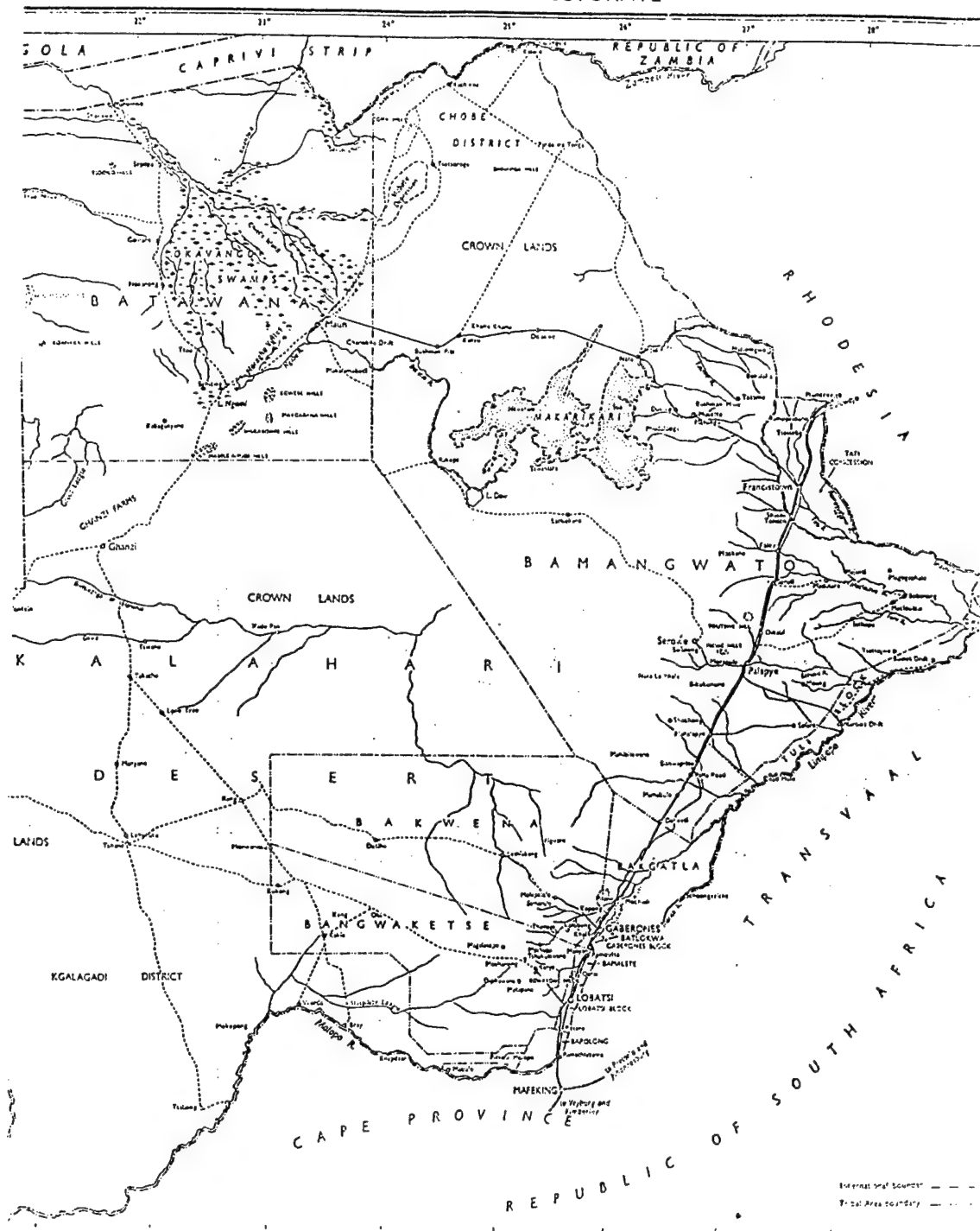
In Botswana one is struck by the unvarying landscape stretching into the distance. Nine-tenths of the country is covered by savanna.

⁵Republic of Botswana, Statistical Abstracts, 1970 (Gaborone: Government Printer, 1970), Table 1.

⁶Republic of Botswana, Census Report, 1981 (Gaborone: Central Statistics Office, 1981).

⁷Alec Campbell et al., The Guide to Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland (South Africa: Winchester Press, 1983), 24.

BECHUANALAND PROTECTORATE



Map done by the Directorate of Overseas Surveys to accompany the Corona Book on Bechuanaland, 1966.

The entire southwest extending northwards to the edge of the Ghanzi Farms and eastward to within about 100 kilometers of Gaborone is bush savanna-endless gently undulating sand, lightly covered with bush which thickens at the ridges.⁸ In the south, much was once open grassland divided by stands of trees, but consistent herding of cattle and regular burning has changed the composition of the grasses allowing poorer species to predominate and thornbush to encroach. Most of the rest of the country is tree savanna, the larger trees growing on rolling dunes with scrub between. In the east, the landscape has been sadly altered by hundreds of years of shifting subsistence agriculture which has robbed the rivers of much of their luxuriant vegetation and laid bare huge areas between them.⁹ Through the northern reaches of the Kalahari winds the Kuando and the Okavango, third largest river in southern Africa. The Okavango Delta covering 5,000km is like stepping into a new world. The river transforms the desert into a panoply of lushly-fringed waterways, islands covered with palms and lagoons filled with water lilies. The Delta consists of a complex network of channels, ox-bow lakes, floodplains and islands rich in bird and animal life.¹⁰ Game reserves in this region protect one of the remaining large herds of wild animals in southern Africa. Apart from the few rivers that bound the country, the Kuando and Okavango river systems are the only source of permanent surface water in Botswana.

Tswana history and culture have been affected by this scarcity of water and poor soils in this region. The chronology of drought since the mid-nineteenth century is well documented in surviving traveller's accounts, colonial and missionary reports, as well as oral traditions. The evidence collectively confirms that drought conditions have occurred

⁸Ibid. Much of this area encompasses the Kalahari desert which is the major ecological influence in the country. The Kalahari is not a true desert but an area of varied vegetation with little surface water.

⁹Ibid., 25.

¹⁰Ibid., 20.

for extended periods since at least the 1840s.¹¹ The effects of drought on one BaTswana community were described by Hayden Lewis, a Molepolole missionary, in 1913.

It is the last day of the old year and I look through the open doors upon a vast expanse of apparently lifeless veldt. The kloof, at the other end of which stands the ruins of the old mission house, looks brown and bare, while the river bed has been turned into a chain of water-holes, with very scant supplies of water shimmering in the gloom of their dark recesses. The tired cattle stand about waiting for their turn for a drink which, if they have shepherds unable to force their claims, does not come until very late in the day, if at all...With their gardens unploughed, the grass and water so scarce...and the cattle in a state of semi-starvation the natives find themselves at wits end to know how to keep body and soul together.¹²

Environmental constraints, particularly drought and disease, contributed to a continuing pattern of migration during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as successive generations of BaTswana were forced to migrate, build new villages, sometimes under new leadership, when land became depleted and the people suffered from drought. As a historical force, the recurring threat of famine has been both a subtle and dramatic factor in shaping local processes of change in Botswana.

The BaTswana people, who inhabit most of Botswana, have their origins in the slow movement of Bantu-speakers into southern Africa and originally belonged to a broader group of cattle-keeping farmers now identified as Sotho.¹³ The first Sotho to infiltrate into South Africa were the ancestors of the modern BaKgalagadi (people living on the fringes or within the Kalahari Desert), who were originally made up of two major groups, the BaKgwatheng and Baboloangwe.¹⁴ The BaKgalagadi,

¹¹Ramsay, "Rise and Fall," 32.

¹²Ibid., 33 quoting report by Hayden Lewis in the One Hundred Nineteenth Report of the London Missionary Society (London: LMS, 1914), 260.

¹³Philip Curtin et al., African History (London and NY: Longman, 1991), 280-284; M. Leggasick, "The Sotho-Tswana Peoples before 1800," in L. Thompson, ed. African Societies in Southern Africa (London: Heinemann, 1969), 86-125; L.D. Ngcongco, "Origins of the Tswana," Pula 1, 2 (1979), 21-46.

¹⁴For a chart on the relationship between the Sotho-Tswana groups now living in Botswana see T. Tlou and A. Campbell, History of Botswana (Botswana: Macmillan Botswana Publishing Co., 1984), 58.

BaKalanga and BaYei settled in Botswana between 1500-1700 (and possibly much earlier) intermarrying with and otherwise absorbing indigenous hunter-gathering communities.¹⁵ During the 16th to early 19th centuries, the ancestors of the modern BaTswana began to enter the country and they in turn subjugated the various groups of BaKgalagadi in the southeast, the Birwa and BaKalanga in the north-east and finally the BaYei in the north-west.¹⁶ In the absence of further archeological and linguistic evidence, reconstructing either a chronology for or the implications of, the expansion of "Tswanadom" prior to the eighteenth century is limited.¹⁷ By 1700 the BaTswana had dispersed over a wide area of land in present-day Botswana, but the people are also found in almost all adjoining areas, particularly the western Transvaal and the northern Cape.¹⁸

As historical forces have forged a new ethnicity out of older diverse populations, Botswana is considered one of the most ethnically homogeneous states in southern Africa, although its past reflects a history of fission and amalgamation. Due to population pressures, ecological disasters and warfare, new communities were continually being formed. Between 1600-1700 there were many breakups amongst the BaTswana

¹⁵Early inhabitants of Botswana who are usually depicted as nomadic hunter-gatherers. However, historical and archeological evidence in the region suggests that there is no justification for suggesting a particular mode of production for any singular group of people. Linguistically this group is identified as "click-speaking" peoples but research has proven that even this classification lacks complete legitimacy. See Anthony Traill, "The Languages of the Bushmen," in Phillip Tobias, ed. The Bushmen (Cape Town: Human & Rousseau, 1978), 137-47; R. Vossen, "Studying the Linguistic and Ethno-History of the Khoe-speaking (Central Khoisan) peoples of Botswana," Botswana Notes and Records 16 (1984), 19-35.

¹⁶Tlou and Campbell, History, 62-66.

¹⁷Ramsay, "Rise and Fall," 37. Two historical efforts worth noting are Leonard Ngcongco, "Origins of the Tswana," Pula, Vol.1, No.2 (June 1979), 21-46 and Neil Parsons, "On the Origins of the bamaNgwato," Botswana Notes and Records, Vol. 5 (1973), 82-103.

¹⁸I. Schapera notes that in 1946 Tswana peoples were distributed as follows: 43% in Transvaal, 32% in Bechuanaland Protectorate, 20% in Cape Province and 5% in OFS. Botswana Notes and Records 4 (1972); see also Kevin Shillington, The Colonization of the Southern Tswana, 1870-1900 (Braamfontein: Ravan Press, 1985).

merafe.¹⁹ It was these splits and the resulting merafe which were to form the nuclei or parent groups of most of the modern BaTswana nations.²⁰ Although current research by Terence Ranger and others,²¹ has explained the fluidity of past identities and the newness of new "tribal" ones, the eight principal BaTswana merafe were identified by ethnographic researchers in the 1950s: the BaKwena, BaNgwaketse, BaNgwato, and BaTawana who claimed a common legendary ancestor and were generally believed to be descended from a single "tribe" of which the senior branch were the BaHurutshe; the BaKgatla, who were perhaps also of BaHurutshe stock but did not enter the Protectorate until 1871; the BaRolong, BaTlokwa and the BaLete, who were not really BaTswana at all, but Transvaal AmaNdebele who had completely assimilated Sotho culture.²² Although each of the eight morafe shared many cultural features, especially common language, they were autonomous entities. There was no common structure or authority but each morafe had its own country and was dominant in that area.²³ In the past the merafe also controlled many tributary groups who were not absorbed culturally.²⁴

Merafe structure and organization in Botswana was somewhat unique. Despite common cultural practices, politically the merafe developed

¹⁹The people who accept the authority of the kgosi, thereby constituting a Setswana polity. Often translated as "tribe." F. Morton, et al. Historical Dictionary of Botswana (N.J., & London: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1989), xviii.

²⁰Tlou and Campbell, History, 66-68.

²¹The Invention of Tradition, eds. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 211-262 and Leroy Vail, Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989), introduction and chapter five.

²²A. Sillery, The Bechuanaland Protectorate (London: Oxford University Press, 1952), xi.

²³The principal tribal areas are shown on a map in the attachments.

²⁴During the colonial era many of the BaKgalagadi communities, as well as the "BaSarwa" were reduced to the status of malata or servants who looked after the herds. See Gaontatlhe Mautle "Bakgalagadi-Bakwena relationship: A case of slavery, 1840-1920," Botswana Notes and Records, Vol. 18 (1986), 19-31; M.N. Gadibolae, "Serfdom (Bolata) in the Nata Area, 1926-1960." Botswana Notes and Records, Vol. 17 (1985), 25-32; S. Meirs and M. Crowder, "The Politics of Slavery in Bechuanaland: Struggles and the Plight of Basarwa in the Bamangwato Reserve, 1926-1940," in S. Meirs and R. Roberts, eds. The End of Slavery in Africa (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988).

independently from each other.²⁵ Unlike the Basuto and the Swazi, the northern Tswana had no single "paramount" leader, each morafe having its own kgosi. A kgosi was a leader who inherited his position among Tswana-speaking people, but achieved legitimacy only after his subjects approved the succession.

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, individual merafe comprised a number of sociopolitical units.²⁶ The social hierarchy of the BaTswana was based upon kinship affiliation and inherited rank and status. At the bottom of this hierarchy was the basic unit of BaTswana social organization which was the family household, consisting of a man, his wife or wives, and dependent children as well as any other dependents such as family members or clients/slaves. The head of the household controlled all social and economic endeavors of its members.²⁷ Several different households, linked patrilineally through a common male ancestor and situated close together in the same village, made up a family group. Under the leadership of the elder, the male members of the family groups sat in consultation to discuss and decide upon family matters; they considered such social events as marriages, funerals, etc. The family group also served as the basic economic unit. Raising cattle, plowing and hut building were accomplished within the family groups. Food and other commodities were shared and loaned between members of a family group.

With the advent of modern record-keeping and administration after 1895, wards or districts were established. Each ward was a distinct administrative unit, occupying its own separate part of the village or

²⁵However, prior to European colonization, there were no precise demarcation lines between the areas inhabited by each of the eight major Tswana merafe, although there were natural boundaries fully recognized by them. "Legal" boundaries or "reserves" were set in 1895.

²⁶This section is largely based on I. Schapera, Handbook of Tswana Law and Custom (London: Frank Cass, 1959 ed.), 89-103, and Schapera, The Tswana (London: International African Institute, 1968 ed.), 34-48.

²⁷As in other parts of Africa, there is an on-going struggle to maintain Tswana customs against the advance of modernity. Family structures in particular have begun to weaken.

town. As well as its residential section, each ward had its own grazing and cultivating areas, but these were not necessarily contiguous, either to each other or to the residential area. Although somewhat dated, Isaac Schapera's observation about local organization provides some insight into the role of rank and status among the BaTswana:

Wards were ranked according to the social hierarchy; first in status were those noble or royal wards consisting of merafe members closely related to the kgosi and royal family. Commoners, immigrants and serfs were in separate wards. Rank had its effects in regard to social status, economic privilege, and political influence, but in a bare subsistence economy seemingly always on the brink of poverty, stratification seemed to play a minor role in day-to-day life.²⁸

The dominant feature of the town or village was the kgotla or meeting place for important public assemblies. This was a crescent-shaped windbreak of poles where the men met to discuss affairs. Every village and in towns every ward had their own kgotla and, of course, the most important was the kgotla of the kgosi's ward. This was the headquarters of morafe administration and it was here that the public business was carried out by the leaders (diKgosi).²⁹ The public assembly, pitso, held at the great kgotla was where all major policies were discussed such as taxation and levies, the undertaking of new public works, the formation of new regiments and morafe disputes, or to celebrate some outstanding occasion. In addition, court cases were generally brought forward and the diKgosi awarded punishment at the kgotla. Historically, the kgotla was the prime political institution of the BaTswana; its function was to decide policy matters; and it was open to participation by all adult male members of the morafe.³⁰ At kgotla there was the principle of free speech, and it was "not unknown for the assembly to overrule the wishes of the chief...If the occasion calls for it, he and

²⁸Schapera, The Tswana, 36-37.

²⁹Schapera, Handbook, 82.

³⁰It was not until after the establishment of colonial administration that Tswana diKgosi began to employ policemen, clerks, tax collectors, etc. Gilfred Gunderson, "Nation Building and the Administrative State: The Case of Botswana" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Berkeley, University of California, 1970), 76-77.

his advisors may be taken severely to task, for the people are seldom afraid to speak openly and frankly."³¹ At the outbreak of the Second World War, the kgotlas were important for the effective mobilization of the male population for wartime military service. They were also places where dissenters could voice their anti-war feelings.

Authority among the Tswana was centered in the kgosi, who possessed supreme executive, legislative, and judicial power. The kgosi was the commander in chief of the army; he regulated the allocation of land, the annual cycle of agricultural tasks, external trade, and other economic activities; and he presided over the main religious and magical ceremonies. The kgosi's power was checked in a number of ways. In administrative affairs, he was obliged to consult advisers. He could seek the informal advice of trusted and experienced men; he was expected to consult a more formal advisory council comprising ward heads. Rarely did diKgosi go against the opposition of the merafe.³² It was their obligation to watch over the interests of the people and treat them justly and well.

With the steady growth of the merafe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, tensions between and within these groups had grown. Conflicts over succession or access to resources often resulted in warfare. Although standing armies were unknown, BaTswana society came to be organized into age regiments, which served as an ad hoc administrative body and military force.

When the son of a kgosi reached about 16 years of age, the kgosi announced the holding of an initiation school or bogwera.³³ All the young men close to this age group were taught the customs and history of

³¹Schapera, The Tswana, 53.

³²T. Tlou, "The Nature of Batswana States: Towards a Theory of Batswana Traditional Government-The Batawana Case," Botswana Notes and Records, Vol. 6 (1974), 72.

³³Girls went through bojale and were formed into similar regiments. It was a prerequisite to marriage and further family responsibilities. I. Schapera, The Tswana, 52.

the morafe. When the boqwera finished teaching the boys they were brought to the kgotla, formed into a regiment (mophato), and given a regimental name. In each instance it was the kgosi's son who became the leader of a regiment with which he or she was initiated. Thus, each regiment was led by a son or close relative of the kgosi. This gave him great power over his army. Only the kgosi could call out an entire regiment which was directly responsible to him; those who failed to answer a call for regimental duty were subject to punishment.³⁴

Age regiments generally served only for short periods of time during a crisis. There were no career soldiers in traditional Tswana society: when "called out" the age regiment performed the duty assigned to it by the kgosi, but after that the members went back to their own family, agricultural endeavors, and herding activities.³⁵ Khama III reformed and modernized his army in 1885. He created specialized regiments including mounted fusiliers, foot soldiers, and non-combatant auxiliaries. Ranking with the army became more pronounced and the permanency of his horse corps marked the beginning of a standing army.³⁶ Long periods of service away from their ordinary pursuits were resented.³⁷ There were no traditions of devastating warfare among the Tswana, but rather small skirmishes or cattle raids.³⁸ The regiments in the army were immunized with medicines to ensure their invincibility and safety from enemy weapons.³⁹ Other duties of the regiments included labor on public works, plowing the kgosi's fields and law enforcement. Regimental labor was unpaid.⁴⁰ These activities created group solidarity

³⁴During recruiting campaigns in WWII, the diKgosi called out the regiments to fulfill military quotas, thus showing the resiliency of this practice over time.

³⁵T. Tlou, "Khama III-Great Reformer and Innovator," in Botswana Notes and Records, Vol. 2 (1970), 98-105.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Gunderson, "Nation Building", 94.

³⁸A. Sillery, Sechele: The Story of an African Chief (Oxford: George Ronald, 1954), 22.

³⁹Tlou, "The Nature of Batswana States," 72.

⁴⁰Tlou and Campbell, History, 76-77.

among members, cutting across local loyalties to family or ward. Membership in a regiment was a lifelong affair and individual achievement was recognized by other members and the diKgosi. During the Second World War, calling up the regiments was one way in which the diKgosi fulfilled their manpower requirements for the African Auxiliary Pioneer Corps.

The rural economy of the Tswana was based on agriculture and cattle-breeding with the allocation of land controlled by the kgosi. Every married male "citizen," noble, commoner, or immigrant, was entitled to a plot of land for a dwelling in the village, another for agricultural endeavors, and the opportunity to graze his livestock in communal pastures.⁴¹ The concept of private property was alien to BaTswana life, and all land was communally possessed by the kgosi and the morafe. Prior to the colonial period, most Tswana reaped a subsistence level of life with little accumulation of wealth.

Apart from cattle, and to a lesser degree, agriculture, the principal factor in the economy of the BaTswana, was the sale of their labor to Europeans. The BaTswana had been in contact with white explorers, missionaries, traders, and hunters since the early nineteenth century. A small group of explorers from the Cape Colony reached the BaTlhaping in southern Bechuanaland in 1801 seeking draught oxen for agricultural operations in the Cape Colony.⁴² They were followed in 1805 by Henry Lichtenstein, in 1812 by W.J. Burchell and in 1813 by the missionary John Campbell.⁴³ It was a surprisingly long time before anything much became known about the country further north.

Trade with European settlers in an indirect relationship probably goes back well into the 18th century if not further. Certainly, by the

⁴¹Gunderson, "Nation Building," 56.

⁴²Ibid., 19.

⁴³Ibid. All wrote accounts of their travels and notes on the people they met. H. Lichtenstein, Travels in Southern Africa; W.J. Burchell, Travels in the Interior of Southern Africa; and John Campbell, Travels in South Africa.

beginning of the 19th century, trade links were well established. By the end of the 1850s the trade in karosses (skin garments), ivory, ostrich feathers and other products were finding their way to European markets by way of Cape traders and merchants. At the same time, European consumer items were appearing in BaTswana towns and villages.⁴⁴ In the 1850s Griqua, BaTlhaping and BaRolong traders opened Bechuanaland to wagon travel and their routes expanded all the way to the Chobe River in the north.⁴⁵ Additionally, the practice among the BaKwena of working on European farms is recorded as early as 1844.⁴⁶ The emergence of these economic opportunities in Bechuanaland affected not merely the economy but all aspects of life. The growing use of money, a desire for profits, and a consumer oriented population were just a few of the visible changes. The early traders were followed by adventurers and missionaries.

Christian missionaries of the London Missionary Society started proselytizing among the BaTlhaping in southern Botswana in 1816, when the Reverend James Read opened a mission station at Dithakong.⁴⁷ By 1841 prominent BaTswana diKgosi were eager to have missionaries at their capital towns, and four more mission stations were established in 1846.⁴⁸ The diKgosi had mixed motives in responding positively to the missionary presence. Most of the diKgosi wanted missionaries for the purpose of using them as middlemen in purchasing firearms and also to use their presence as a deterrent against outside attacks.⁴⁹ This motive often

⁴⁴J.M. Chirenje, History of Northern Botswana (Rutherford, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1977), 30.

⁴⁵Tlou and Campbell, History, 122.

⁴⁶Sillery, Sechele, 28.

⁴⁷Anthony Sillery, Botswana: A Short Political History (London: Methuen & Company, 1974), 16. This was the forerunner of the Kuruman station with which such figures as Robert Moffat, David Livingstone, and John Mackenzie were later associated.

⁴⁸Schapera, Tswana, 15.

⁴⁹Anthony Atmore, et al., "Firearms in South Central Africa," JAH, XII, 4 (1971), 245-56; J. Mutero Chirenje, "A Survey of the Acquisition and Role of Firearms in the History of the Tswana, 1801-1885," Unpublished African History seminar paper, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, University of London, 27 November 1968.

eluded white missionaries, who erroneously thought that BaTswana rulers and their subjects hungered for salvation. In 1849, Rev. J.J. Freeman, a delegate sent by the LMS to southern Africa to inspect their mission observed that African communities desired to have missionaries for strategic reasons: "...but it is clear, in all these cases that the [Africans] are partly influenced by the hope that the missionary may render them some protection against the intrusion of their troublesome neighbors."⁵⁰

The missionaries, despite many failures and disappointments, had some success in gaining converts. When the London Missionary Society began a school at Shoshong in BaNgwato territory in 1862, the diKgosi sent their children to learn about the Christian religion.⁵¹ Kgosi Sekgoma, although refusing to convert, sent his two sons Kgama⁵² and his brother Kgamane to the school. During this period several leaders became converts: Sechele I (BaKwena) was baptized 1848, and Moremi II (BaTawana) was baptized in 1881.⁵³ By the turn of the century, there were still many diKgosi who refused to convert, fearing that missionary teaching threatened old customs.⁵⁴ One of the biggest misconceptions is that all the early missionaries were Europeans. Actually there were few white missionaries until the 1890s; black missionaries trained in the

⁵⁰John Mackenzie, Ten Years North of the Orange River (Edinburgh, 1871), 409.

⁵¹J. Mutero Chirenje, Chief Kgama and His Times, 1835-1923 (London: Rex Collings, 1978), 5; Tlou and Campbell, History, 124.

⁵²Ibid. The baptism of Kgama (Khama) was as much an asset to Christendom as it was a diplomatic investment for the BaNgwato because he remained an ascetic Christian for the next 63 years, during which time he put to good use his religious affiliation, and in doing so ward off the more serious forms of white encroachment on his chieftdom.

⁵³Sechele was converted by Livingstone and was influential in promoting educational efforts in Botswana. Ramsay, "Rise and Fall," 84. I. Schapera, Tribal Innovators: Tswana Chiefs and Social Change, 1795-1940 (London: Athlone Press, 1970), 119-20. See also Schapera's edited works on Livingstone including Family Letters, Private Journal, and Missionary Correspondence.

⁵⁴The BaTlhaping rejected religious teaching but looked to the secular advantages of associating with the missionaries such as trade. See Anthony Dachs, "Missionary Imperialism-The Case of Bechuanaland," in JAH, XIII, (1972): 647-659.

mission schools travelled throughout Bechuanaland evangelizing the people.⁵⁵ Missionaries, white or black, brought changes which slowly undermined the power of the diKgosi.

Missionaries attacked Tswana culture and sought deliberately to transform Tswana society during the 1860s. Christian doctrine demanded an end to "heathen" practices. Rain-making rites, boqadi (bridewealth), polygyny, boqwera and bojale (male and female initiation schools) for instance, were increasingly discarded, although not entirely abandoned.⁵⁶ As John Mackenzie acknowledged, missionary success was "the work of conquerors".⁵⁷ However, Schapera emphasizes that while Tswana chiefs readily accepted some innovations, they rejected or resisted others and originated their own measures for coping with the problems that arose from white contact.⁵⁸ By the Second World War, most of the soldiers from Botswana were identifying themselves to colonial officials as Christians on their enlistment papers.

With the arrival of the missionaries, traders and labor recruiters, colonial rivalry and regional conflict were soon to follow. From religious rivalries, (the L.M.S. vs German Lutheran Missionaries) to clashes with the Boer Republics was but a short step and by the last half of the nineteenth century Tswana society was embroiled in rivalries between the British, Germans and Boer settlers. Conflicts of values and strategies took a number of BaTswana societies to the verge of civil war during the period.⁵⁹ Historically, this period is important for another reason. It was during the 19th century that Bechuanaland became a labor

⁵⁵ In 1877 African evangelists under the leadership of Khukhu Mogodi were sent among the BaTswana in Ngamiland. Tlou and Campbell, History, 132-33. See also Q.N. Parsons, "The Evolution of Modern Botswana: Historical Revisions," in The Evolution of Modern Botswana (London: Rex Collings, 1985), 31.

⁵⁶Tlou and Campbell, History, 134.

⁵⁷Dachs, "Missionary Imperialism," 650.

⁵⁸Ibid., 651.

⁵⁹For example, the conflict between Sekgoma, Khama and Macheng in the BaNgwato area between 1857 and 1872. Khama finally acceded to the chieftainship in 1872. See Chirenje, History of Northern Botswana, 102-103.

reserve for South Africa. The reasons for labor migrancy included environmental, economic, political, and social problems within the territory. These same motivations would lead Africans to consider other areas of employment, including military service in subsequent years.

Soon after the Boer Voortrekkers moved into Tswana areas in the contemporary Transvaal in the 1830s, they began to force Africans to work for them by instituting a Labor Tax.⁶⁰ Eventually, the conflict between Boer settlers and local populations over rights to labor and land in the Transvaal forced a number of Tswana groups to flee the area. Between 1850 and 1870, three Tswana groups--the BaKgatla, BaLete, and BaTlokwa--migrated from the Transvaal into Botswana as a result of Boer encroachments.⁶¹

The BaTswana further north were also threatened by the Voortrekkers who sought to "establish their local hegemony through the alienation of black African land, expropriation of black African property, and coercion of black African labor."⁶² Chief Sechele's mophato, armed with guns obtained from the Griqua and European traders, fought off a Boer invasion in 1852 in order to preserve BaKwena

⁶⁰The general subject of forced labor in the Boer republics as well as the specific social institution of *inboekselings* (indentured servants) has been ignored by historians until recently, Ramsay, "Rise and Fall," 98. Two recent studies on the social institution of *inboekselings* see Peter Delius and Stanley Trapido "Inboekselings and Oorlams: The Creation and Transformation of a Servile Class," in B. Bozzoli, ed., Town and Countryside in the Transvaal: Capitalist Penetration and Populist Response (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1983) 53-81. and Fred Morton "Manumitted Slaves and the Dutch Reformed Church Mission in the Western Transvaal and Eastern Bechuanaland at the time of the Colonization of Southern Africa, 1864 to 1914" (draft paper tabled at the Symposium "Manumission: the Promise of Freedom" held at the Twelfth International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences, Zagreb, 28th of July 1988.)

⁶¹I. Schapera, Migrant Labour and Tribal Life (London: Oxford University Press, 1947), 25. Although these groups remained a minority in Botswana, they were influential in the military history of the territory to modern times. See later chapters.

⁶²Agar-Hamilton, The Native Policy of the Voortrekkers (Cape Town: Maskew Miller, 1928); Ramsay, "Rise and Fall," 92.

independence.⁶³ When gold was discovered on the borders of BaNgwato territory in 1866, the Boers tried to annex the Tati goldfields into the South African Republic (SAR). This was disputed territory, claimed by Chief Macheng (BaNgwato) and Mzilikazi (AmaNdebele).⁶⁴ The British supported the chiefs and refused to accept the Boer annexation. The Tati gold turned out to be reef gold which was too expensive to mine and the Boers lost interest in this venture.

As early as 1844, there were labor migrants going to the Cape Colony and the South African Republic.⁶⁵ According to William Duggan, "David Livingstone...reported that, as a result of drought in 1848 to 1851, great hunger forced many BaKwena into the Kgalagadi in search of wild foods, while 66 went to the "Cape Colony" to find work."⁶⁶ In 1872 a severe drought again motivated some BaKwena to migrate as described by a missionary in Molepolole:

Great numbers of the poorer people have for now been scattered in search of food, some in the hunting field, others among distant tribes who were more favored last season, others again went among the Boers and to the Diamond fields to earn a livelihood.⁶⁷

With the discovery of diamonds at Kimberley in South Africa, the need for cheap labor had escalated. The first labor recruiter appeared among the BaNgwato in 1877 and according to Neil Parsons, 105 men were sent to the diamond mines in that year.⁶⁸ Labor depots were quickly established

⁶³Little has been written about the BaTswana-Boer War of 1852-53. Summary of events using primary material in Ramsay, "Rise and Fall," 93-109. See also Livingstone Missionary Correspondence; J. Chapman, Travels in the Interior of South Africa, E.C. Tabler, ed. Two volumes (Cape Town: A.A. Balkema, 1971).

⁶⁴Cambridge History of the British Empire, Volume VIII, "South Africa, Rhodesia and the Protectorates" (Cambridge University Press, 1936), 426.

⁶⁵Sillery, Botswana, 137.

⁶⁶William Duggan, "The Kweneng in the Colonial Era: A Brief Economic History," Botswana Notes and Records, Vol. 9 (1977), 42.

⁶⁷David Massey, "The Development of a Labor Reserve: The Impact of Colonial Rule on Botswana," Boston University African Studies Center Working Paper (Boston University: 1980), 6.

⁶⁸Neil Parsons, "The Economic History of Khama's Country in Botswana," in The Roots of Rural Poverty in Central and Southern Africa, Robin Palmer and Neil Parsons, eds. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 124.

along the route to the south; recruiters visited the courts of the BaTlhaping, BaRolong, BaNgwaketse, BaKwena, BaKgatla and AmaNdebele to gain the cooperation of the diKgosi.⁶⁹ Migrants came from as far north as Shoshong and were transported by wagon to the mine fields.⁷⁰ BaTswana mine workers were initially attracted by the possibility of earning enough money to acquire wives, cattle, firearms, wagons, plows, and consumer goods. During the colonial period, another incentive for cash employment was taxation.⁷¹ By 1880, there were 2,135 BaTswana working on the Kimberley diamond mines.⁷² In 1886 gold was discovered on the Witwatersrand which created an even greater demand for cheap labor. By 1899, some 100,000 African men were working on the gold mines around Johannesburg.⁷³ Labor migrancy and capitalist demands became direct challenges to British and South African military recruitment in southern Africa during both World Wars.

According to Massey, the response of the BaTswana to the growing demand for labor in South Africa was geographically uneven.⁷⁴ The BaNgwato, living astride the "road to the North" connecting the Cape with Rhodesia had prospered from the growth in trade and transport that came with European penetration into their area. They prospered from growth of long-distance trade, the sale of cattle, and the provision of food to travellers passing through Shoshong in transit to Rhodesia. Because of these successful economic activities, few BaNgwato migrated and they became increasingly more powerful, dominating colonial relations in southern Bechuanaland in the twentieth century.⁷⁵ Their

⁶⁹J. Ramsay, "Rise and Fall," 161.

⁷⁰I. Schapera, Migrant Labour, 25.

⁷¹While there is no historical evidence which shows decisively that forcing men into wage labor was the primary purpose of the Hut Tax in Botswana, the colonial officials were well aware that the introduction of such a tax would necessitate such a movement. See A. Sillery and I. Schapera, "Commentary on the Report of the Population Census-1971," Botswana Notes and Records, Vol. 6 (1974), 108.

⁷²Massey, "The Development of a Labor Reserve," 6.

⁷³Ibid.

⁷⁴Ibid.

⁷⁵Ibid.

strategic geographic position would play an important role in defense of the territory during the Anglo-Boer War as well.

Between 1895 and 1911, the onset of another ecological crisis served as a further catalyst for the rapid transformation of Bechuanaland into a labor reserve. During the last decade of the nineteenth century, much of Bechuanaland was plagued by rinderpest, drought, locusts, and an array of human epidemics. In the wake of this ecological crisis, it is estimated that 90 percent of the cattle and much of the remaining wildlife perished.⁷⁶ Due to widespread immiseration, many people were forced to migrate in search of a livelihood. The migrant pool consisted of women as well as men from across the local social spectrum.⁷⁷ The BaTswana were thus drawn into the swelling ranks of migrants dependent on South African wages. Between 1890 and 1930, labor migration became a central feature of the region's political economy, experienced by nearly all men and youths, and affecting every level of society.⁷⁸

European missionaries saw the destruction of the cattle economy as a positive force in transforming the BaTswana into a productive capitalist society. One missionary at Molepolole reported that:

The loss of their cattle has driven large numbers to seek work. Certainly the best thing that could happen as far as teaching them the value of labour is concerned. Work was the last thing thought of except among the poorer classes and with these the period rarely exceeded six months. All that is altered. A generation will pass before this country will recover its lost wealth in cattle.⁷⁹

⁷⁶Ibid., 7. The impact of the rinderpest disease on rural peoples is discussed by William Beinart, "The Anatomy of a Rural Scare: East Griqualand in the 1890s" in Hidden Struggles in Rural South Africa (London: James Currey Ltd., 1987), 46-77. In Ngamiland the depletion of wildlife was so severe it caused a temporary contraction of the tsetse belt around the Okavango. Andrew Murray, "The North-West," Birth of Bechuanaland: A History of the Bechuanaland Protectorate from 1910 to 1966, Morton and Ramsay, eds., (Gaborone: Longman Botswana, 1987), 110-22.

⁷⁷Ramsay, "Rise and Fall," 244.

⁷⁸Barry Morton, "Migrancy and its Impact on Botswana," African Studies Presentation, Indiana University, 23 January 1995.

⁷⁹Massey, "The Development of a Labor Reserve," 7.

The Bechuanaland missionaries supported economic individualism and privatization of land as a way to further British commercial interests and weaken the influence of the diKgosi.⁸⁰ By encouraging younger men to engage in new economic activities, missionaries played a vital role in weakening the power of the diKgosi to control men's labor at the village level. According to Dachs, "because the missionaries had had limited success in converting the Tswana, they turned their attention to undermining what they considered their major obstacle-the power of the innumerable chiefs."⁸¹ In the words of Edwin Lloyd:

I have long seen that their cattle stood between our people and their progress. While they possessed so many cattle, the young men and boys were obliged to herd them, and were prevented from coming to our schools to learn. In addition the cattleposts were the principal schools of heathenism, where untold evil was both taught and practiced.⁸²

Ramsay notes another reason for missionary complicity, "the missionary sentiments about the blessings of remunerated toil complemented the objectives of the British Colonial Office, which saw the famine as an occasion to encourage men to seek wages."⁸³ As a recruitment inducement, local officials distributed grain and food in conjunction with work schemes.⁸⁴ However, the merafe resisted social and economic changes encouraged by the missionaries and officials, opposing British influence as much as Boer when it threatened BaTswana society.⁸⁵

The social and economic history of the BaTswana prior to the Anglo-Boer War of 1899 had political ramifications for the future. Outside influences such as the missionaries, traders, and labor recruiters, mostly from South Africa, were bringing changes to this once

⁸⁰Dachs, "Missionary Imperialism," 652.

⁸¹Ibid., 654-657.

⁸²Ramsay, "Rise and Fall," 246.

⁸³Ibid., 247.

⁸⁴Ibid.

⁸⁵Ibid., 248. Chiefs Sebele, Bathoen and Khama refused the aid offered through the Bechuanaland Relief Committee, which had been sponsored by official and missionary elements because they feared there might be strings attached which would undermine their authority. This aloof posture was soon overwhelmed by desperate circumstances and rations were distributed.

relatively isolated territory. Both British and Boers were increasingly aware of the future potential of Bechuanaland, as the colonial struggle for access and control of mineral wealth and labor in the region was escalating. In turn, tensions between British administrators and Boer leaders involving power politics, land, and security issues were directly impacting on BaTswana independence. The BaTswana diKgosi struggled to maintain a position of political strength at the local level in the face of white encroachment. Astutely evaluating their options, the diKgosi were forced to manipulate their changing political, economic and social environment to their best advantage. The strategies they employed eventually led to a closer union of British imperial interests with that of merafe interests at the turn of the century.

Shortly after the German Declaration of a Protectorate over South West Africa in 1884, the British informed Germany that the area of what is now Botswana, south of latitude 22 degrees and west at 20 degrees was henceforth a British Protectorate, whilst the area south of the Molopo and north of Cape Colony was proclaimed to be a British colony under the name of British Bechuanaland.⁸⁶ The British government unilaterally had assumed jurisdiction over Bechuanaland and the Kalahari. The new Protectorate included the lands of the BaKwena, BaNgwaketse and the BaNgwato and it was hoped that this agreement would create better relations between the Governor of the Cape Colony, Sir Hercules Robinson, and these merafe. By an Order in Council dated the 27th of January, Robinson was awarded a special commission to administer the new Protectorate and instructed to inform the diKgosi of their new status within the Empire.⁸⁷

⁸⁶Between 1892 and 1899, these boundaries were subsequently placed further north to include all of the BaNgwato country. Sillery, Founding, 93ff.

⁸⁷Richard Stevens, "Establishment of the Bechuanaland Protectorate," in Richard Stevens, Lesotho, Botswana and Swaziland (London, 1967), 119. See also PRO CO 879/22/292, (also in BPP C. 4432)-Derby to Robinson, March 14, 1885; also Colonial Office to Foreign Office, March 14, 1885 and Foreign Office to Colonial Office, March 20, 1885.

As the nineteenth century drew to a close, Bechuanaland's only apparent real value, other than strategic, was as a thoroughfare to the more lucrative trade of the Africa interior.⁸⁸ That the British Government had no immediate interests in the newly proclaimed protectorate was clearly stated by Robinson:

We have no interest in the country North of the Molopo except as the road to the interior. We might therefore confine ourselves for the present to preventing that part of the protectorate being occupied by either filibusters or foreign powers, doing little in the way of administration. The Chiefs might be left to govern their own tribes in their own fashion, and their offer of lands to Her Majesty's Government...should be refused.⁸⁹

The declaration of the Protectorate was not accompanied by any British plans for direct administration. In theory, the relationship between the colonial administration and the merafe was defined in terms of the external protectorate and the parallel rule idea.⁹⁰ The external protectorate concept was based on the assumption that the Tswana societies were being "protected" from outside forces, especially the Boer and German threats, and that the establishment of the Protectorate would have no effect upon the internal relationships between a Kgosi and his subjects. Imperial government policy allowed the diKgosi maximum internal independence as long as they maintained law and order.

From the very beginning, British and BaTswana relations were somewhat strained. General Sir Charles Warren was despatched to allay the fears of the diKgosi, and satisfy the conditions set down in the Berlin Conference regarding effective occupation. At Shoshong, the message was at first enthusiastically welcomed by Kgosi Khama

⁸⁸Revisionist Q. N. Parsons argues that the protectorate was declared in 1885 for political and economic reasons. According to him, most historians ignore the fact that a road (and later a railway) is an economic asset. Other economic interests were the need for labor supplies in the S.A. mines, the need for food in the form of cattle and trade. See Parsons, The Evolution of Modern Botswana, 29-30.

⁸⁹Chandler Morse et al, Basutholand, Bechuanaland and Swaziland, Protectorates Report of an Economic Survey Mission (London: HMSO, 1960), 37.

⁹⁰Parallel rule by Louis Picard, "From Bechuanaland to Botswana: An Overview," in Parsons, The Evolution of Modern Botswana, 11.

(BaNgwato).⁹¹ He hoped that British protection would lessen the threat of external aggression, whether from the Boers or from AmaNdebele. Khama also saw imperial protection as an instrument to bolster his own royal authority. Internal opposition to Khama was mounting under the leadership of his brothers and other diKgosa. In any ensuing conflict between the kgosi and his nobility, it was British policy to uphold the authority of the kgosi.⁹² However, Khama being a shrewd leader, emphasized he would maintain local control and would not tolerate:

...to be baffled in the government of my own town or in deciding cases among my own people according to customs, but again I do not refuse help in these affairs. Although this is so, I have to say that there are certain laws...which are advantageous to my people, and I wish that these laws should be established and not taken away by the Government of England.⁹³

The other diKgosi were less secure in their relationship with the British and thus were very wary of British "protection". Warren met with varied success as he proceeded throughout the Protectorate talking to the diKgosi. Following Khama's lead, Kgosi Gaseitsiwe (BaNgwaketse) reluctantly accepted protection and agreed to give the British some land.⁹⁴ Kgosi Sechele and his son Sebele (BaKwena) opposed protection on the grounds that they no longer required protection.⁹⁵ Sechele deeply resented that Britain unilaterally declared a Protectorate stating, "I do not understand the exact object of your coming here."⁹⁶ Sebele, as Kgosi of the BaKwena after 1891, fought to limit British interference in BaKwena affairs arguing, "I wish to govern my country myself, and not

⁹¹Schapera, Tribal Innovators, 41.

⁹²Maylam, Rhodes, 20.

⁹³Stevens, "Establishment of the BP," 121.

⁹⁴All the chiefs offered huge tracts of land but according to Sillery it was mostly uninhabited and difficult to access. Some tracts in the east were claimed by the Matabele. The Bechuanaland Protectorate, 56-57.

⁹⁵Minutes of the meeting attended by 300 BaKwena and excerpts can be found in BPP C. 4588 and a long unofficial text published within an article "Sir Charles Warren at Sechele's" Diamond Fields Times (April 1885).

⁹⁶Ramsay, "Rise and Fall," 173. According to Ramsay, Sechele was not being absolutely straightforward because he had heard reports on future plans regarding British protection.

have it governed by white people."⁹⁷ And on a subsequent occasion he directed the following to a colonial administrative official:

As you know yourself, Chief, my wish is to remain independent. I do not want a magistrate. I want only independence. As to protection I say nothing. I like it, but I do not like it any more...We have received no assistance from you; all we have got from you is trouble.⁹⁸

This interaction between different authorities has been a major theme in the changing nature of ruler-ruled relationships in the Bechuanaland Protectorate.⁹⁹ It was clear that the BaTswana diKgosi regarded the Protectorate as protection from outside enemies such as the Boers but they insisted on non-interference in their domestic affairs.

Understanding the history of British involvement in Bechuanaland and the often troublesome relationship with its southern neighbor, South Africa, may seem insignificant to military events in the twentieth century. However, there are important historical connections. British paternalist attitudes towards the BaTswana had deep roots and affected many policy decisions between 1900 and 1945. Although the BaTswana had experience juggling relations on many levels from missionaries to labor recruiters, the opinion of many whites was that the BaTswana were naive in the political world around them. Because the population was largely rural into the 1930s, the BaTswana were also considered "country bumpkins" without education or knowledge of modernity. In an effort to "protect" the rural BaTswana from the transforming effects of the Second World War, British policy-makers initially place Africans in primarily non-technical auxiliary positions.¹⁰⁰ The British will continue to redefine their relationship with the BaTswana and formulate their defense policies regarding the Protectorate based on inaccurate and ill-defined neo-traditions of dependency and pacificism.

⁹⁷Sillery, Founding, 192.

⁹⁸Ibid.

⁹⁹Gunderson, "Nation Building," 125.

¹⁰⁰For a discussion of the restructuring of African armies and invented traditions see T. Ranger, The Invention of Tradition, 224-225.

II. Imperial Defense Policy and the Protectorate

In order to protect British imperial, capitalist and missionary interests, it was determined in 1885 that a small army was needed to patrol the new Protectorate's borders. Instead of sending British imperial troops stationed at the Cape¹⁰¹, the High Commissioner authorized the formation of the Bechuanaland Border Police (BBP) to patrol the borders and prevent "occupation by filibusters".¹⁰² The new force was modeled after the famous Cape Mounted Riflemen (CMR) from South Africa and in fact many who joined the new force had been with that unit.¹⁰³

The strength of the unit was fixed at 500,¹⁰⁴ including an artillery troop. The existing local police, 100 strong, were absorbed in the corps, and the rest of the NCOs and men were obtained partly from the men of the three disbanded mounted units of Warren's force.¹⁰⁵ Africans serving in the police force were mostly non-Tswana from Basutoland recruited for service in Bechuanaland in accordance with British security policies.¹⁰⁶

Lieutenant Colonel Frederick Carrington, formerly of the CMR, commanded the new frontier cavalry unit. Much like the CMR, the Border Police were used for imperial military duties including town and village patrols, guard and escort duties, and operations against the troublesome

¹⁰¹All the territories needed garrisons and no imperial troops were available; yet the one thing magistrates, traders and loyal natives desired was to see regular troops, preferably Her Majesty's "redcoats," in the upcountry stations. Major G. Tylden, "The Permanent Colonial Forces of Cape Colony," in Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research, Vol. 19 (1940), 158.

¹⁰²Very little appears to have been written on this force. There are references to it in A.S. Hickman, Men Who Made Rhodesia, 20-22 and in Colin Harding, Frontier Patrols.

¹⁰³Major G. Tylden, "The Bechuanaland Border Police, 1885-1895," in Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research, Vol. 19, (1940): 236.

¹⁰⁴Ibid.

¹⁰⁵Ibid.

¹⁰⁶W.F. Gutteriege, The Military in African Politics (London: Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1969), 8-9. Non-local police forces were thought to be more trustworthy in a local crisis. Basutos were recruited for the BBP and were excellent soldiers. Tlou & Campbell, History, 176.

merafe. At Gaborone and at Macloutsie, forts had been established with small garrisons. The former was intended to keep the rebellious diKgosi Lenchwe and Sebele in check, while the latter-an important outpost-provided protection to Khama and his people from any inroads of Boer farmers, and acted as a check on Lobengula.¹⁰⁷ At various smaller outposts along the road between the two places, and at some of the principal kraals, parties of police were established in case of a Boer invasion.¹⁰⁸ By 1888 most of the troops were employed on the Matabele frontier including the artillery unit.¹⁰⁹

The AmaNdebele (Matabele) threat emanated from Cecil Rhodes' plans to invade Lobengula's territory for his own aims.¹¹⁰ Rhodes's Pioneer Column, consisting of a party of 380 men with their wagons, servants and laborers, left for Mashonaland in 1890.¹¹¹ Initially the BBP were detailed to protect the column and their lines of communication, but not to enter Matabele country.¹¹²

During 1891 and 1892 isolated border incidents had raised tensions in Bechuanaland. In order to prevent further cattle and slave raids, the police were reinforced. Matters came to a climax in the summer of 1893. Jameson abandoned any hope of negotiating with Lobengula and decided to wage war upon the Matabele. Kgosi Khama was solicited to provide men for scout work, and to give timely warning of any movements

¹⁰⁷Stafford Glass, Matabele War (London: Longmans, 1968), 28.

¹⁰⁸Despite rumors of a planned invasion by Paul Kruger's military forces, an organized Transvaal-sponsored plan to attack Bechuanaland never materialized.

¹⁰⁹The artillery troop was equipped with four 7-pdr. R.M.L. mountain guns and four .45-in. Maxim guns on galloping carriages. Tylden, "The B.B.P.", 238.

¹¹⁰The British South Africa Company was in financial trouble and Rhodes wanted Lobengula's territory to mine for gold. He obtained by trickery the famous Rudd Concession from Lobengula which granted "charge over all metals and minerals" in his kingdom. Cooper, History, 132-136; Maylam, Rhodes, 118-121.

¹¹¹About 200 were B.S.A. Company Police, a military body intended to guard the column on its northward march and then to keep order in Mashonaland. Stafford Glass, The Matabele War, 9.

¹¹²Sillery, Founding, 138.

of the Matabele.¹¹³ Khama was then offered ammunition and horses in case of "certain eventualities".¹¹⁴ In October 1893, BBP forces combined with 2,000 of Khama's men, armed with Martini-Henry rifles,¹¹⁵ participated in the Matabeleland invasion. According to Ramsay, the participation of Khama's men, along with the bulk of the BBP under Goold Adams, contributed to the settler triumph despite subsequent Company attempts to discredit their contributions.¹¹⁶

The participation of the BBP in the ensuing AmaNdebele War was supported by local administrators in Bechuanaland. It offered the chance to bring a potentially rich area under British authority and to hold the door open for further northward expansion of British trade while at the same time providing a solution to the problem of the Transvaal's growing economic influence in southern Africa, all without direct British government expenditure. Since his appointment as High Commissioner in 1889, Sir Henry Loch a staunch and orthodox imperialist had wanted to see the end of the power of the British South Africa Company (BSAC).¹¹⁷ His personal war aim was to defeat Lobengula and then annex Matabeleland as a Crown Colony to be administered by him. To this end he had been building up the strength of the BBP.¹¹⁸ When the force became involved in excessive mopping-up operations against Lobengula's

¹¹³Glass, The Matabele War, 38.

¹¹⁴Ibid.

¹¹⁵Khama provided military assistance to the British because he hated the Matabele and he profitted from the provision of logistical support. Khama was paid £1,000 for his mephato's services. Ramsay, "Rise and Fall," 196-7. Neil Parsons "The Economic History of Khama's Country in Botswana, 1844-1930," in The Roots of Rural Poverty in Central and Southern Africa, Robin Palmer and Neil Parsons (eds.) (Heinemann, 1977), 113-43; 122-25; Chirenje, Chief Kgama and His Times, (London: Rex Collings, 1978), 28, 52.

¹¹⁶Khama pulled his men out on 5 November because of smallpox and because it was time to plough. Rhodes, Goold Adams and the High Commissioner never forgave him and he was considered a deserter. Hugh Hole, The Passing of the Black Kings (London: Philip Allan, 1932), 271.

¹¹⁷For a good discussion on the use of the High Commissioner's position to further British aims see John Benyon, "The Cape High Commission: Another neglected factor in British imperial expansion in Southern Africa," in South African Historical Journal, No. 5: 28-40; Glass, Matabele War, 270.

¹¹⁸Ibid.

army, they became an embarrassment to the Imperial government.¹¹⁹ The Colonial Office was adamant that the BBP should not be used for BSAC's dirty work and demanded that the imperial forces be withdrawn from Matabeleland.¹²⁰

The British Treasury was also upset over financing Border Police military operations. One of the major goals in granting "Protectorate" status was that of economy. The cost of maintaining the BBP had become onerous, representing not less than 60% of the joint budget for the Colony and the Protectorate.¹²¹ "The cost of this force", wrote Lord Ripon, "cannot be put at less than £100,000 a year-a charge altogether in excess of doing similar work in other frontier possessions or protectorates of the Empire."¹²² The high cost of maintaining a police force that was also tasked to further military goals meant that internal security suffered, and economic or social services were neglected.¹²³ This was recognized by one British official early in 1889:

The Treasury while hesitating to refuse any Police supplies that are pronounced necessary for "safety," will always be able to make "no-revenue" a plausible excuse for objecting to other services, and this is only one step removed from the old Imperial policy of spending thousands on military expeditions, and refusing many thousands for civil services.¹²⁴

In the first years of the Protectorate, the British Treasury refused to sanction even the most basic of civil services arguing that the British government had no plans to develop a local administrative center, the Police served this function. Virtually all internal

¹¹⁹Two BBP were convicted of running off with a bag of gold sovereigns and a message to the effect Lobengula wished to talk peace sent to Colonel Forbes during his advance to the Shangani. The money and note may have prevented the loss of the "Shangani Patrol" under Col. Wilson in Dec. 1893 see Robert Cary, A Time to Die (Cape Town: Howard Timmins, 1969), 149-162.

¹²⁰Maylam, Rhodes, 124.

¹²¹Sillery, Founding, 57.

¹²²Ibid.

¹²³During the first quarter of the nineteenth century over 90 percent of government expenditure was accounted for by routine administrative functions, and that, of this, well over one-third was spent upon the police force. See chart in Colclough and McCarthy, The Political Economy of Botswana, 29.

¹²⁴Maylam, Rhodes, 28.

administration in the early years was conducted by and through policemen.¹²⁵ Small detachments of police were encamped at the principal military outposts; communication with the chiefs was normally conducted through these police; and tribal disputes were settled by policemen, sometimes junior in rank. John Moffat¹²⁶ saw the inadequacy of the system and suggested that a commissioner with assistants should be resident in Bechuanaland, and that the BBP should be withdrawn, since they were considered unsuited to the management of internal affairs. Rather they should be replaced by sixty local constables.¹²⁷ The suggestion was never implemented; the Treasury was still trying to save money and disapproved of the measure. For ten years between the declaration of the Protectorate and the annexation of British Bechuanaland to the Cape Colony, a large body of police was thus maintained in Bechuanaland.¹²⁸ In August 1895 the BBP was disbanded and the Protectorate was policed by No. I Division of the British South Africa Police. Bechuanaland did not get a locally recruited police force until 1896.

It is evident that policy-makers (both military and civilian) showed a willingness to recruit and support armed indigeneous police forces in the late nineteenth century to protect British interests in southern Africa. However, conflicts arose over the appropriate roles African forces could assume in local defense. Historical accounts of the Matabeleland invasions suggest that the BBP were used for both the external and internal management of violence. African forces volunteered for military service and performed well in combat against enemy forces to protect their own interests, as well as cooperating with

¹²⁵Information in this section taken from Sillery, Founding, chapter IV.

¹²⁶Rev John Smith Moffat who was appointed assistant commissioner in 1887.

¹²⁷The use of native constables was standard British colonial police force procedure. They were recruited from the local populations for a period of years and were paid a lower salary rate than other administrative services. Anthony Clayton, Khaki and Blue, 8.

¹²⁸Maylam, Rhodes, 29.

British officials on an ad hoc basis to secure strategic interests of the empire. However, it appears that British military officials in later years suffered from selective amnesia regarding African contributions. Settler fears over arming Africans combined with fiscal limitations served to reinforce the "invented tradition" that Africans were never effective in defense roles and should not be entrusted with the heavy responsibility of defending whites against enemies foreign or domestic.

As long as the region remained peaceful, the British government was inclined to leave defense issues in the hands of the Protectorate's few appointed administrators, a trend which will continue into the twentieth century. In the case of Deputy Commissioner Sidney Shippard, this was a license to bully the BaTswana into accepting arbitrary policies. In 1889, he made the position quite clear to Bathoen:

All the Chiefs who are under Her Majesty's protection in the Bechuanaland Protectorate are bound to obey the Government in all things lawful. They are only at liberty to take up arms when attacked by external enemies or when called upon or expressly allowed by Her Majesty's Government to do so.¹²⁹

Shippard, acting on orders from the High Commissioner, was trying to gain some semblance of control over this vast new territory. This could not be accomplished without gaining the cooperation of BaTswana leaders who were often at odds with each other and the administration. The BaTswana asserted that they would maintain full power over their own internal affairs and handle their own defense problems.

In 1889 Shippard convened a conference at Kopong to discuss defense matters, settlements over land and communications and the payment of a hut tax as a contribution towards the cost of their protection. Shippard tried but failed to convince the diKgosi to take, "the measures requisite for the effectual and permanent defence of the Protectorate against invasion including the establishment of fortified

¹²⁹Ibid., 35.

camps for the Bechuanaland Border Police at suitable places."¹³⁰ The diKgosi stated that they already had their own defensive alliance and simply hoped to have continued access to arms and ammunition. They further indicated that they would not place their mephato under British military command.¹³¹ As early as 1889 then, the diKgosi resisted the military incorporation of their fighting men into units which were not under their complete control. The training, arming and employment of armed forces within the Protectorate was the responsibility of the Protectorate's leaders and these machinations by Shippard and others were a direct threat to their autonomy. Subsequently, the diKgosi grew obstinate over further concessions of land use for military purposes.

In 1890 Shippard again sought cooperation from the diKgosi to construct additional police camps and build telegraph lines with local labor.¹³² DiKgosis Sebele, Bathoen, and Linchwe protested against the extension of the telegraph through their territories. Bathoen had already granted concessions for the railway and telegraph rights to the Kanye Concession Company and he refused under any conditions to part with land for a police camp.¹³³ Linchwe actually attacked the telegraph crew and refused to allow a telegraph office to be built in his territory. Shippard was then authorized by Carrington to deploy an additional 100 BBP in the southern part of the Protectorate.¹³⁴ Their presence was justified to the Colonial Office by exaggerated reports of local resistance, as a manifestation of the true source of local authority.¹³⁵

In the immediate aftermath of Kopong, there was imperial concern that Kgosi Sebele and his allies were girding themselves for armed

¹³⁰Ramsay, "Rise and Fall," 190.

¹³¹Ibid.

¹³²Sillery, Bechuanaland Protectorate, 63; Founding, 139.

¹³³Ibid.

¹³⁴Ibid.

¹³⁵Ramsay, "Rise and Fall," 203.

resistance against the expanded presence of the BBP.¹³⁶ However, Bathoen, Sebele and Linchwe were helpless against the superior might of the police. In 1889, Sebele objected to the police digging wells in his territory, and he was quickly warned by Carrington that any interference could result in the destruction of Molepolole.¹³⁷ It soon became clear that the men-on-the-spot were pushing aggressively for a radically expanded colonial presence and the total subjugation of the diKgosi.¹³⁸

Despite the official policy of noninterference in local affairs, Downing Street was in no position to exercise any firm control over imperial administrators in Bechuanaland who wished to take control.¹³⁹ Toward the end of the nineteenth century, the Colonial Office found itself operating under considerable pressure. The Office was overcrowded, and its staff overworked.¹⁴⁰ In its policy-making, it was trying to safeguard a number of conflicting imperial interests. And it would often find itself in the middle of a cross fire: on one side would be informal pressure groups and imperial administrators, pushing for a more forward policy; and on the other would be Parliament and the Treasury, demanding economy and retrenchment.¹⁴¹

The legacy of conflicting policy goals regarding defense and the role of indigeneous armed forces in Bechuanaland would have long lasting consequences throughout the colonial period that would be exasperated further by growing outside interference from South Africa. As defense issues took a back seat to political and economic concerns in the region with the "pacification" of the AmaNdebele and others, Britain seriously considered relinquishing its political and military responsibilities.

¹³⁶Ramsay, "Rise and Fall," 198.

¹³⁷Maylam, Rhodes, 36.

¹³⁸Sillery, Founding, 138. Colonial Office correspondence reveals that the Colonial Office was having great difficulty in restraining the forward bent of the local administration in the Protectorate.

¹³⁹Maylam, Rhodes, 36.

¹⁴⁰Robert V. Kubišek The Administration of Imperialism: Joseph Chamberlain at the Colonial Office (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1969), 12-16.

¹⁴¹Maylam, Rhodes, 36-37.

III. South African Ambitions and the New Protectorate

British policy makers considered two options which would relieve them of political and economic responsibilities in the lands of the Tswana: annexation of both British Bechuanaland and the Bechuanaland Protectorate by the Cape or granting a royal charter to the British South Africa Company (BSAC). Both options met with heavy resistance from the diKgosi in Bechuanaland who still envisioned themselves as autonomous leaders of political importance in the region. A short summary of the historical events between 1891 and 1939 provides insights into the "official mind" of British imperialism and how it affected military/civilian relationships in the future. Arguably, Bechuanaland's rocky and uncertain path to maintain its independence from South Africa contributed to the diKgosi's perceptions and attitudes on the British "commitment", concepts of loyalty, how to organize their society against internal and external threats, white racism, land and labor issues, and lastly, their "rights and liberties" under British law.

In January 1891 Loch, the High Commissioner, citing "concession questions" went to England with Rhodes and presented a memorandum pressing for the annexation of the Bechuanaland Protectorate and all territories within the British sphere of influence. At the time the Colonial Office refused to consider annexation but it did issue two Orders-in-Council which increased the legislative powers of the High Commissioner. It was hoped that through these new powers, the High Commissioner could enforce "reasonable taxation" on the diKgosi in order to make the Protectorate somewhat self-supporting and less of an imperial burden.¹⁴² In 1894 after lengthy Parliamentary discussions, Chamberlain approved the incorporation of British Bechuanaland into the Cape much to the consternation of the diKgosi to the north. However, the Colonial Office, under pressure from humanitarian lobbies in

¹⁴²Ramsay, "Rise and Fall," 217.

Bechuanaland and in London, did not include the Protectorate.¹⁴³

It is well recorded that the British Government had seriously entertained the idea of transferring all imperial responsibilities for Bechuanaland to the British South Africa Company. It was certainly Rhodes's intention that the Bechuanaland Protectorate, as foreseen in the 1889 charter of the BSAC, should ultimately be taken over by the Company in the same way as Matabeleland and Mashonaland.¹⁴⁴ The Secretary of State for the Colonies stated that, "it was generally understood that the Chartered Company would relieve Her Majesty's Government of the expense and responsibility of the Protectorate as soon as the Company had satisfied the Government that it was in a position to do so."¹⁴⁵ Lord Ripon went on to explain the advantages of relinquishing control:

The example of the Imperial East Africa Company shows that such a body [a chartered company] may to some considerable extent relieve Her Majesty's Government from diplomatic difficulties and heavy expenditure. In Lord Knutsford's judgment such a company as that proposed for the Bechuanaland Protectorate, if well conducted, would render still more valuable service to Her Majesty's Government in South Africa.¹⁴⁶

One of the most appealing factors for the transfer of authority was the cost of maintaining the Police: "...the spectre of the Bechuanaland Protectorate always haunted Whitehall as an indigent country demanding exorbitant sums for its defense."¹⁴⁷ Khama, in a petition to the British Secretary of State, had recognized the importance of this issue when he suggested that if the transfer was a question of money the Government could effect economy by withdrawing its soldiers.¹⁴⁸ Khama then offered to pay a tax to support the administration of the Protectorate including the police force. His petition was ignored by Whitehall.

¹⁴³Gunderson, "Nation Building," 164.

¹⁴⁴Sillery, Bechuanaland Protectorate, 66.

¹⁴⁵Ibid.

¹⁴⁶Sillery, Founding, 127. Also Bechuanaland Protectorate, 66.

¹⁴⁷Ibid., 57.

¹⁴⁸Khama offered to pay tax to support the administration of the Protectorate including a police force. Sillery, Bechuanaland Protectorate, 67.

The BSAC pressed Khama and other diKgosi for land and mineral concessions throughout the 1890s. Rhodes had several grand schemes in mind for the Protectorate. In 1893 he sent his agent Isaac Bosman to acquire two land concessions from Kgosi Sekgoma which he planned to use to establish a Boer colony in Ngamiland.¹⁴⁹ The concessions were granted by Sekgoma under the threat of physical violence.¹⁵⁰ Bathoen also had his fears: he appealed to the British for protection against Bosman, who was threatening to seize BaNgwaketse lands. The British Secretary of State disallowed the Ngamiland concessions, but by 1894 it was becoming apparent to all of the diKgosi, including a by now anxious Khama¹⁵¹, that the Chartered Company, would continue to fight for formal control over the Protectorate.

In June 1895 it was reported that the major diKgosi were becoming increasingly apprehensive about the possible transfer of their territories to the company. Khama, Bathoen and Sebele drafted petitions to Chamberlain asking to remain under imperial rule. They were alarmed at the prospect of being handed over to the BSAC: "We wish to remain just what we have been for years, viz., the Children of the Great Queen."¹⁵² The diKgosi then made plans to visit England to petition the Queen directly for protection.

The three great diKgosi while in London met with officials at the Colonial Office and attended public meetings to gather support for their cause. Resolutions and petitions from churches, temperance societies and various other groups poured into Chamberlain's office. Chamberlain soon realized that it could be politically dangerous to permit the

¹⁴⁹Maylam, Rhodes, 145.

¹⁵⁰Sekgoma granted 999 year leases which gave the Company unrestricted power to do as it liked with all the land of his country. Something even the Kgosi did not have the power to do. Sillery, Founding, 185.

¹⁵¹Antagonism between Rhodes and Khama had been building since the Matabele war. The BSAC claim to "disputed territory" within BaNgwato lands in 1895 mark the final breakdown of Khama's collaboration with Rhodes. Maylam, Rhodes, 177.

¹⁵²Ibid.

transfer of Bechuanaland to the BSAC during an election year.¹⁵³ Despite last ditch efforts by the BSAC to convince imperial administrators to cooperate, it became evident that arbitration was the only solution to the stalemate. Chamberlain decided to "make an end of the trouble" by dividing the Protectorate between the BaTswana and the Company. The three BaTswana diKgosi who had travelled to England obtained guarantees of land, independence and imperial protection. Each was given a reserve which roughly followed the old boundaries set by Warren's expedition in 1885.¹⁵⁴ The Company was given administrative power over lands near the Transvaal border (Gaborone, Lobatse and Tuli Blocks), through which the Cape to Rhodesia railway would pass. These together with the Tati District and Ghanzi became the only European areas in Bechuanaland.¹⁵⁵

Rhodes, now the Prime Minister of the Cape Colony as well as the master of Rhodesia, and Sir Hercules Robinson, the new High Commissioner, were not dissuaded by Chamberlain's decree. For Rhodes, the formal acquisition of the Protectorate had been viewed as a necessary stepping stone to the realization of his greater ambition to achieve sub-continental hegemony through the armed seizure of the South African Republic.¹⁵⁶ His plans were not to be thwarted, BBP imperial forces would be used to launch an invasion of the Transvaal.¹⁵⁷ The resulting debacle of the infamous Jameson Raid led to the sudden eclipse of BSAC's political presence within the Protectorate at the very moment of its consolidation.¹⁵⁸ Because of Jameson's illegal invasion, the British government was forced to withdraw its support for the BSAC. The administration of the Protectorate could now scarcely be transferred to

¹⁵³Tlou and Campbell, History, 160-1.

¹⁵⁴For an explanation of the settlement see Tlou and Campbell, History, 161; Maylam, Rhodes, 167-172.

¹⁵⁵Tlou and Campbell, History, 165.

¹⁵⁶Ramsay, "Rise and Fall," 232.

¹⁵⁷In December 1895, 125 BBP of all ranks volunteered for the ill-planned and disastrous Jameson Raid. Tlyden, "The Bechuanaland Border Police," 241.

¹⁵⁸Ramsay, "Rise and Fall," 231-2.

a company whose former managing director had been the leading promoter of a shabby conspiracy and whose board had been reprimanded for its negligence and ineptitude. The transfer of the Protectorate was postponed indefinitely; it remained under imperial control for the present. There would be other attempts to bring Bechuanaland under South African control but ultimately the long history of resistance against incorporation by the diKgosi would prove successful.

Official British policy after 1900 favored the incorporation of the Protectorate in a self-governing united South Africa as a means of liquidating its administrative expenses in the territory. The Union of South Africa Act provided for the possible future incorporation of the three High Commissioned Territories and Rhodesia. But the Act also stated that Britain would only transfer the three territories after consulting with the people. This part of Section 151 of the 1909 Act read:

The King in Council may, on address from both Houses of the Union Parliament, agree to this (incorporation) subject to certain conditions designed to protect native rights and interests embodied in a schedule to the South Africa Act.¹⁵⁹

This clause not only had adverse consequences on the Protectorate but also put its future into question as calls for incorporation began to be voiced from 1910 onward.¹⁶⁰ The first call was made in 1913. This was repeated in 1924 and in 1933 just before the Status of the Union Act of 1934. The 1934 Act, by granting effective independence to South Africa, removed the original safeguards from the inhabitants of the Bechuanaland Protectorate and although the transfer was not effected, the demand for it persisted. In 1938 a Standing Joint Advisory Conference composed of the three Resident Commissioners (in Bechuanaland, Basutoland and Swaziland), the South African Secretary for Native Affairs and two other Union officials was convened to discuss the issue of integration.

¹⁵⁹Chipasula and Miti, Botswana in Southern Africa, 4.

¹⁶⁰Summary of events prior to 1939 taken from Chipasula and Miti, Botswana in Southern Africa, 4.

However, the outbreak of the Second World War forestalled further discussions on the issue.

South Africa's persistent but unsuccessful demands for incorporation of Bechuanaland and the HCT was prompted by a desire to acquire more land for white farmers, and cattle ranchers. Additionally, an English liberal paper of the Rand suggested that Bechuanaland might form a very useful dumping ground for the "surplus population" (African, of course) of the Union.¹⁶¹ Another reason was that South Africa was anxious to extend its racial policies to all Africans in the region. Because South Africa's racialist laws stood out compared to laws in the territories, it caused African discontent inside South Africa and stimulated external condemnation of South Africa's racist policies.¹⁶² In the Protectorate, Africans enjoyed some political and civic rights and participated in running their own affairs to some extent. There were no pass laws in the Protectorates and segregation was mild. BaTswana migrants who worked in the mines of South Africa shared stories and experiences of discriminatory practices in the mining compounds and compared them to life back home. Another reason for seeking the transfer of the Protectorate was that South Africa wanted to secure and control cheap labor for its mines and farms.

According to Richard Venghoff, the only reason the Union Government did not press harder for the incorporation of Bechuanaland, was because the weak political structure within the Protectorate posed no direct threat to South Africa. It was believed that in time the transfer would occur and it was not worth risking a confrontation over

¹⁶¹John Burger, The Black Man's Burden (London: Victor Gallancz, 1943), 221. This is similar to the German idea of "Lebenstraum".

¹⁶²Chipsula and Miti, Botswana in Southern Africa, 5; Mary Benson, Tshekedi Khama (London: Faber and Faber, 1960), 118-119. Enlightened men as Lord Lugard, the Marquess of Lothian, Sir Edward Grigg, the Earl of Selborne, and Leo Amery, M.P., protested against the transfer. Margery Perham was also steadfast and in a moving protest said: "The time is coming when the opinion of black Africa will be of far more importance than that of white Africa." Letter to Dr. J. Oldham, April 30, 1935.

the issue. Thus the lack of development and political mobilization in Bechuanaland decreased the intensity of South African demands for incorporation.¹⁶³ Of course, this theory gives little credit to the continued efforts of the BaTswana to control their own destiny.

From 1908 the BaTswana diKgosi of the Protectorate waged a campaign to influence the British Government to drop its plan for incorporation. Kgosi Khama, who had in his lifetime faced the threat of European alienation of his country, was particularly adamant in his opposition to incorporation in the impending South African federation.¹⁶⁴ Khama sent two petitions to the King reminding him of the agreements made with Chamberlain in 1895 and expressing his dissatisfaction with the Government's new plan to transfer their responsibilities. Khama was keenly aware of the oppressive nature of the white regime in South Africa and mentioned them in his first petition:

We understand well the character of the Native administration of these colonies, we know that the natives have no land of their own, many have no gardens to plough, nor are they allowed to chop wood or carry guns, nor have they any cattle, and a native is not regarded as a human being in those colonies, and we are convinced that we live under very much more fitting conditions of life than do the natives of the colonies about to join in the Union of South Africa, and that is due entirely to the direct government we have enjoyed of your Most Gracious Majesty.¹⁶⁵

Khama reminded the British that he had always been loyal and that it was his desire to serve the King until the last days of his life.¹⁶⁶

Kgosi Bathoen and his son Seepapitso (Kgosi 1910-16) also fought diligently against incorporation. Seepapitso on being told that Bechuanaland would be incorporated wrote to the High Commissioner protesting against it.¹⁶⁷ Not satisfied with the reply he received, he

¹⁶³Richard Vengroff, Botswana Rural Development in the Shadow of Apartheid (New Jersey: Associated University Press Inc., 1977), 27-28.

¹⁶⁴Louis W. Truschel, "Accommodation Under Imperial Rule; The Tswana of the Bechuanaland Protectorate, 1895-1910" (Ph.D. diss., Northwestern University, 1970), 127.

¹⁶⁵Quote taken from Truschel, "Accommodation," 137.

¹⁶⁶For a complete discussion of Khama's efforts see Mary Benson, Tshekedi Khama, Chap. 9.

¹⁶⁷Schapera, "Short History," 21.

and his people also sent a petition to the King, asking to remain directly under the Crown based on the "rights and liberties" conferred on the BaNgwaketse by the Queen in 1895. His petition like Khama's commented on the oppression suffered by Africans in South Africa, and said they were sure that they would be better off if they were left in their present position.¹⁶⁸

News of the pending incorporation reached Sebele I in 1908 and aroused great anxiety among his people. Sebele I also sent petitions to the High Commissioner detailing his objections to federation. Sebele's objections centered around his fear of losing BaKwena autonomy under South African rule. European officials in South Africa, he complained, were guilty of frequently undermining the positions of African leaders and making arrests of Africans without informing their diKgosi. He also objected to the measures of excessive taxation of Africans in the European-run territories.¹⁶⁹

The Union Government continued to agitate for transfer of Bechuanaland between 1909 and 1939. Several significant changes occurred during the 1930s which altered the constitutional background against which section 151 of the South Africa Act was conceived. The Statute of Westminster of 1931 and the Status of the Union Act of 1934 made it possible for the Union Parliament to alter the South Africa Act and its schedule in any way it wished. The safeguards so carefully devised in 1909 could be abolished, and neither the British Government nor the British Parliament could prevent it. However, an assurance was given by the High Commissioner, Lord Selborne, that the inhabitants of the Territories were entitled to know the "permanent and deliberately adopted policy of the Union towards all South African Natives" before consent on the transfer would be sought.¹⁷⁰ Prior to the Second World

¹⁶⁸Truschel, Accommodation, 172-3.

¹⁶⁹Ibid., 228.

¹⁷⁰Mary Benson, Tshekedi Khama, 119.

War, the British government decided it would be preferable to avoid making a decision on the transfer because of opposition in Britain, in Parliament, the Press, and among the informed members of the public.¹⁷¹

The diKgosi had fought the campaign against incorporation into South Africa against overwhelming odds exhibiting determination and vision. The victory, however, was overshadowed by the many challenges which continued to erode at their independence as British domination was solidified through informal and formal means.

IV. Internal Political Situation in Bechuanaland Prior to 1939

Bechuanaland's uncertain political future had several adverse ramifications prior to 1939. The first is that the Protectorate remained politically decentralized and thus lacked an efficient administrative system.¹⁷² One consequence was the steady extension of British authority over the diKgosi. However, colonial aims remained limited in scope; focusing on keeping the peace, collecting revenue and introducing small-scale improvement projects.¹⁷³ The administrative headquarters of the "Resident" Commissioner remained outside the Protectorate (in Mafeking, South Africa) during the colonial period. Two Assistant Commissioners (South and North) were stationed at Khama's capital and the Gaberones police camp to facilitate the flow of all instructions.

Internal administration and the provision of services were left to the diKgosi under the "parallel rule" system, whereby the diKgosi were left to run their morafe and territories in the way they saw fit.¹⁷⁴ And

¹⁷¹Margery Perham's famous debate with Lionel Curtis in The Protectorates of South Africa. The Question of their Transfer to the Union (Oxford: O.U.P., 1935) informed many "liberals" about the injustice of incorporation.

¹⁷²Before independence, white officials running the Protectorate numbered fewer than 100 men. Morton and Ramsay, Birth of Botswana, 2.

¹⁷³Ibid.

¹⁷⁴A weakness of "parallelism" was pointed out by Sir Allen Pim in 1933, "Administrative expenditures exceed the resources available to meet it and the imposition of a European administrative organization involves to a certain extent what amounts to duplication of staff." BNA BTA 20/1 Box No. 20 Bamangwato Tribal Administration.

as long as taxes were forthcoming and as long as there was no political troubles which they could not themselves suppress, the diKgosi were left to get on with the job.¹⁷⁵ The only forum for African political participation in the Central administration was the "Native Advisory Council" (NAC) formed in 1919 which usually met only once a year.¹⁷⁶ However, its members were all nominated by the administration.¹⁷⁷ Among the thousands of people who lived under colonial rule, only a select few were informed about affairs in the Protectorate.¹⁷⁸ What is more, the tiny number of whites in the country were simultaneously granted an elected advisory council to review policy for the white population of the Protectorate. For many years the white council repeatedly pressed for the incorporation of the territory in the Union of South Africa while the NAC continuously opposed the idea.

British control over the diKgosi remained slight until 1934 when reforms were introduced. In 1934 after the Pim Report had warned that diKgosi had achieved a practical autocracy and did frequently resort to abuse, the British administration subsequently took measures to limit their authority.¹⁷⁹ Two proclamations, the Native Administration and Native Tribunal Proclamation were issued.¹⁸⁰ These proclamations allowed

¹⁷⁵Ibid. This policy often resulted in a lack of coordination and isolation. Theoretically the "native administration" was to be an integral part of the machinery of government. However, in Bechuanaland this was not the case.

¹⁷⁶Renamed African Advisory Council in 1940. This body met annually and was attended by representatives of the BaKwena, BaNgwaketse, BaKgatla, BaMalete, BaRolong, and BaTlokwa. Khama (BaNgwato) refused to participate because of the failure of his fellow diKgosi to follow his lead in banning all alcoholic beverages from their territories. I. Schapera, Tribal Innovators, 185-86.

¹⁷⁷Khama III refused to join the "Native Advisory Council" in 1920 stating, "I receive nothing of the good laws of England but the oppression from the Officials." Q.N. Parsons, The Word of Khama (Zambia: Associated Printers Ltd., 1972), 25.

¹⁷⁸Fred Morton and Jeff Ramsay, eds. The Birth of Botswana: A History of the Bechuanaland Protectorate from 1910 to 1966 (Botswana: Longman, 1987), 5.

¹⁷⁹BNA S 353/14 Affairs in the Bechuanaland Protectorate: Mr. W.G. Ballinger criticisms of "Chiefs and Magistrates," 1933.

¹⁸⁰For a detailed account of both see Hailey, Native Administration in the British African Territories, Part V: The High Commission Territories (London, 1953).

for the removal of a kgosi by the colonial government, recognized the necessity of appointing a formal body, that is a Tribal Council, to assist the kgosi and regulated the composition and procedure of Tribal courts.¹⁸¹ For specific functions the kgosi was made a subordinate government officer. Although the proclamations were accepted and put into effect by most morafe, they were challenged in court (July 1936) by Tshekedi Khama (BaNgwato) and Bathoen II (BaNgwaketse).¹⁸² They claimed that the High Commissioner exceeded his powers, violating their rights as guaranteed by Britain in 1895, but in the end they lost their case.¹⁸³ In reality local laws and customs continued to be respected when they facilitated the maintenance of peace, order and stable government.¹⁸⁴ However, with regards to defense (both police and military forces) in the twentieth century, Africans had increasingly fewer choices.

The unique tripartite relationship between Great Britain, South Africa and Bechuanaland prior to the Second World War affected colonial policies on colonial administration and chiefly powers, the use of labor resources, military organization and defense. British authorities avoided any great financial expenditures while trying to protect strategic and economic interests in the region. To affect this policy, the British relied heavily on local resources. The Bechuanaland Border Police, as well as irregular forces recruited by the diKgosi, protected the Bechuanaland borders and supplied soldiers during times of crisis. As the colonial administration became more entrenched, the use of these forces became less necessary and unpopular. The BaTswana merafe continued to retain control over their military forces despite efforts by some local administrators to create an imperial force led by British

¹⁸¹Kunnie Kooijman, "Social and Economic Change in a Tswana Village," (Dissertation: Leiden University, 1978), 39.

¹⁸²Tshekedi nearly was banished over failing to comply with the new laws. Mary Benson, Tshekedi Khama, 124-5.

¹⁸³Schapera, Tribal Innovators, 61; Mary Benson, Tshekedi Khama, 131.

¹⁸⁴Mary Benson, Tshekedi Khama, 129.

officers (mostly from South Africa). As we have seen, colonial policies in Bechuanaland were closely tied to the ever-changing political, economic and social climate in South Africa at the turn of the century. In the next chapter, the history of the nature of military organization, recruitment and employment of African troops during the Anglo-Boer War and World War I will be examined within the context of British colonial interests in Africa. One trend seems clear, British military commanders relied on BaTswana manpower to fulfill its security obligations in the region. However, greater and greater pressure would be applied to conform to segregationist policies emanating from South Africa especially with regards to the roles allowed black Africans in the military.

Chapter Three: The Tswana Military Experience Before the Second World War

Overview:

Several major events in Bechuanaland prior to 1939 had an impact on British military policy during the Second World War. These events involved three primary participants: Great Britain, South Africa and Bechuanaland. Twice in less than twenty years Bechuanaland participated in wars involving their "protector", the British. In both cases the BaTswana were told to stay out of "white man's quarrels," but in the same instance their support and loyalty were essential to the overall successful conclusion of these conflicts and the maintenance of British supremacy in the region.

The Boer War, and in particular the First World War, brought changes in the way British army officials regarded the military roles of Africans. In Britain, the Colonial Office strenuously resisted War Office pressure to use African fighting troops outside the continent, but they played a major role in British military operations within Africa (except South Africa). Under pressure from a racist South Africa, Africans from Bechuanaland and the other High Commissioned Territories (HCT) were prohibited from enlisting as combatants in 1899 during the Anglo-Boer War and in 1914 during the Great War.¹ Thus, the HCT were not expected to bear the military burden for the maintenance of British supremacy in the region but rather to take up important support roles. Despite their limited military role prior to 1939, the BaTswana were significant contributors to these campaigns as laborers, porters, and food producers. Monetary contributions were also important.

BaTswana loyalty to the British empire during these conflicts had

¹It has been well documented that this policy was difficult to enforce in a war environment which continually suffered from manpower shortages. Both British and the South Africans military commanders abused the policy when exigencies demanded that dictates from politicians be ignored.

an impact, albeit a small one, on future events. The British government praised the BaTswana in official proclamations, but frequently played down their importance when deciding the eventual fate of the Protectorate. When the South Africa Act of 1910 was passed, British politicians fully expected that the Protectorate would be transferred to the Union at some future date.² However, they clearly delineated in the Act several clauses guaranteeing African participation in any future transfer.³ Because of the persistent efforts of the BaTswana diKgosi to sway British public opinion and their continued loyalty to the Crown, especially during the First World War, transfer to the Union was postponed on several occasions. Although the Protectorate's territorial integrity remained intact, the South African government continued to sway British military policy in the region during the inter-war period.

By 1939 a political crisis erupted over the role of Africans in the military. As in the past, the British depended on their colonial possessions for military assistance to defend their own country and for the security of the empire. After the fall of France in June 1940, British military commanders expected a critical shortage of manpower in military operations in Europe and North Africa. The call went out to all the British allies to recruit additional military forces. For the first time in the history of the Union, the question of whether Africans should take part in the defense of South Africa as combatants or not, was raised in the House of Commons.⁴ Some politicians, fearful that the war would spread to Africa and that there was a great probability of Union forces having to fight Mussolini's African armies in the north, were in favor of arming Africans. As expected, Afrikaners opposed the

²House of Commons, Parliamentary Debates, vol. 9 (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1909).

³House of Commons, Parliamentary Debates, pp. 957, 971, 1,011. (Clause 151 of the act stimulated considerable debate resulting in government assurances that the transfer would not take place without first considering the position of Africans.)

⁴"For the Defence of South Africa," Bantu World, 27 April 1940, 4.

idea pointing out that it would be a direct violation of their traditions and that it would break down the color bar. After much heated debate, the South African government decided against arming Africans and the policy was applied to the HCT by default. General Smuts, the South African Defense Minister, agreed to form an African Labor Corps in order to release white South African soldiers for front line combatant duties. History had repeated itself; Africans living in South Africa and the HCT were denied the right to enlist as combatants.

When the news of war reached the Protectorate, the diKgosi officially expressed their loyalty to the British cause. However, their position on recruiting manpower for a labor contingent was made clear by Tshekedi Khama. The merafe were tired of living under the darkening shadow of South Africa.⁵ As war preparations commenced in Europe and Africa, the diKgosi began their campaign for an autonomous military force under British command. Due to the persuasive powers of Tshekedi Khama and the critical shortage of manpower in Europe, the British reluctantly agreed to organize all the HCT military forces into British units in 1941. It was the culmination of years of effort by the Protectorate's diKgosi to gain international recognition.

⁵There had been a concerted effort in 1938 for incorporation on the part of South Africa which was fresh in the memories of the BaTswana.

I. Tswana Participation in the Anglo-Boer War and Great War

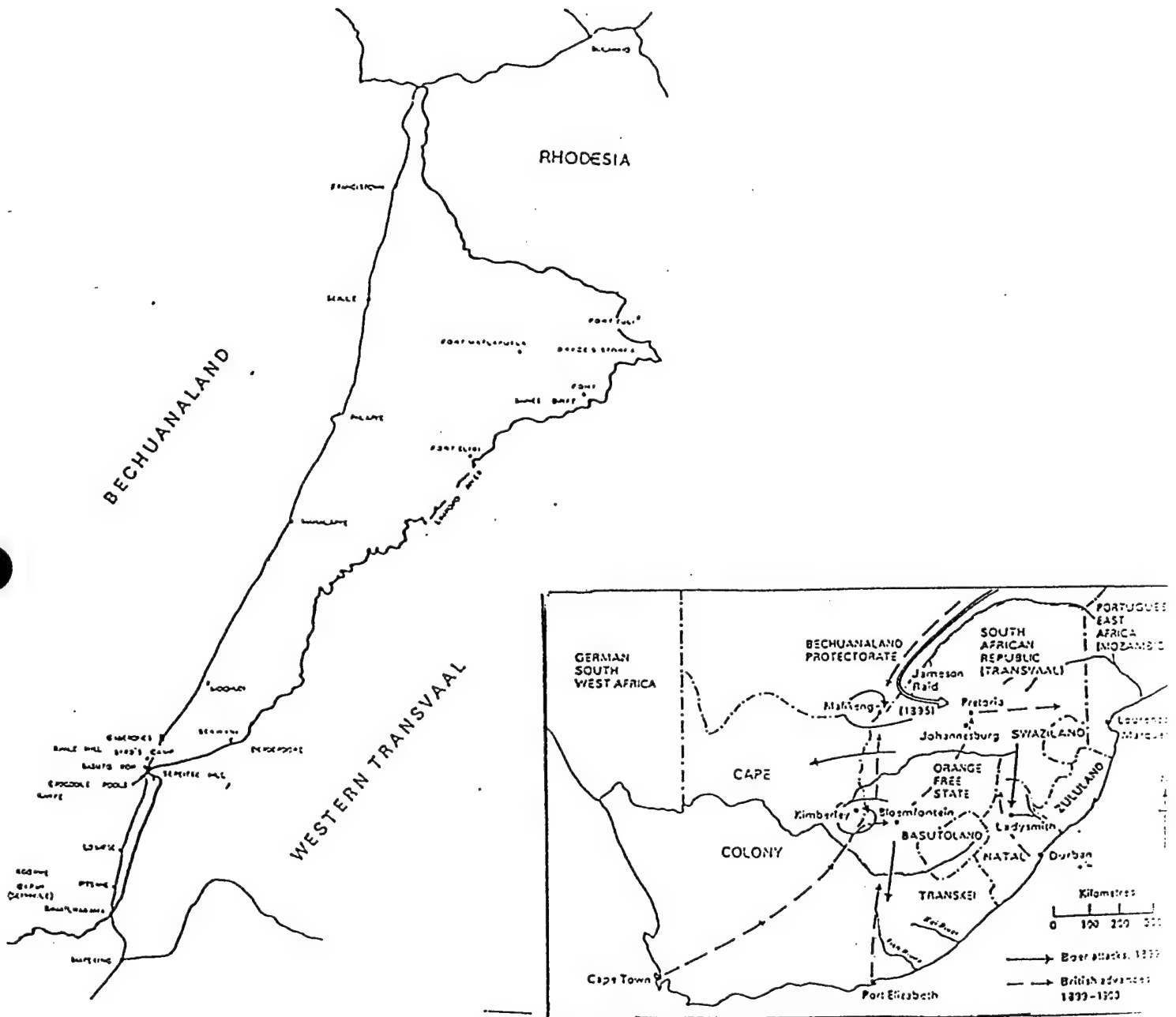
While the Bechuanaland Protectorate was settling down under its new administration, South Africa, on the other hand, was moving towards a confrontation between the British and the Boers. According to Jan Smuts, "The Jameson Raid was the real declaration of war in the Great Anglo-Boer conflict...And that is so in spite of the four years truce that followed...the defenders on the other hand silently and grimly prepared for war."⁶ Events leading up to the outbreak of hostilities have been covered extensively in other historical works and time does not permit the retelling in this study.⁷ However, the Anglo-Boer War is important in discussing the policy of the British towards African military forces during the early colonial period. Although only a small colonial protectorate, Bechuanaland was strategically placed to assume an important defensive role during the war. Additionally, the Anglo-Boer War is significant in BaTswana military history because some groups participated as combatants despite colonial policies against arming Africans. The Anglo-Boer War also provided a historical precedence for later generations to call upon when arguing for greater military responsibilities in both world wars. The Anglo-Boer War was fought largely outside the borders of the Bechuanaland Protectorate⁸ but it also had an impact on British relations with the BaTswana diKgosi between 1899-1902. The Resident Commissioner of the Bechuanaland Protectorate, Colonel Hamilton Goold-Adams, was at Mafeking when hostilities commenced.

⁶Jan Smuts 1906 quoted in T. Pakenham, The Boer War, 3.

⁷For a list of sources see Pakenham's bibliography in The Boer War, 619-632.

⁸The only two clashes of arms which can be termed "battles" on Protectorate soil are, a) that outside the Lobatsi Gorge, south of the dam, and b) that on the Molopo River where the Southern and Northern Relief Columns combined pushing the Boers back and relieving Mafeking. Ellenberger, "The Bechuanaland Protectorate and the Boer War, 1899-1902," Rhodesiana no. 11 (December 1964), 18.

THE ANGLO-BOER WAR, 1899-1902
BRITISH ADVANCES THROUGH BECHUANALAND



Kevin Shillington, *History of Africa* (New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1989), 330-331. British reinforcements were deployed from 'Rhodesia' and sent south along the main road through Bechuanaland. BaTswana *diKqosi* provided the British with water and supplies.

Goold-Adams decided to remain at Mafeking with his staff, but had given last minute instructions to Mr. William Henry Surmon (Assistant Resident Commissioner for the southern district) to carry on the administration of the Protectorate on his behalf should communications between Mafeking and the north be interrupted.⁹

When Bechuanaland was invaded by Kruger's forces shortly after the outbreak of hostilities, the BBP were ordered to evacuate the small fort at Gaberones and join Colonel Plumer's force which was coming south from Rhodesia.¹⁰ The only provision made locally against attacks by Boers was a warning given to the diKgosi. Mr. Surmon, before leaving Gaberones, advised the southern diKgosi to make the best terms possible with the invaders until the Transvaal Republic was conquered by the advancing British Army.¹¹ He stressed to the diKgosi that the High Commissioner did not want the BaTswana to take up arms against white men unless the enemy invaded their Reserves. It had been decided that the war was "white man's business" in which the Africans should take no part.¹² However, an examination of a few key campaigns will show that the British relied on the Batswana diKgosi for military support during the war-both offensively and defensively.

The British were not overly concerned about pro-Boer sympathies in the Protectorate except for the Kgafela Kgatla who were near the border. These people had migrated from the Transvaal and had close ties with Dutch Reformed missionaries-their leader Linchwe was baptized into the Dutch Reformed Church in 1892 after divorcing two of his three wives.

⁹Ibid., 1. Lieutenant Colonel J.E. Ellenberger was serving as Assistant Resident Magistrate when war broke out and his eye-witness account is one of the few we have of events in Bechuanaland during the war.

¹⁰According to Ellenberger, local forces, i.e. the Police, were not increased but, after the relief of Mafeking were supplemented by small Imperial garrisons at vital points on the railway line, from Gaberones southward. "The Boer War," 18.

¹¹Sol T. Plaatje, Native Life in South Africa (Johannesburg: Ravan Press edition, 1982), 274.

¹²Ibid., 276.

At the outbreak of hostilities, it was feared that Kgosi Linchwe's regiments might be called out by the Afrikaners against the British. However, the Kgafela Kgatla had been forced to flee the Transvaal because of land alienation and forced labor practices by the Boers, and they were looking for revenge. Linchwe viewed the conflict as an opportunity to restock BaKgatla cattle herds and a way to reassert his authority over kindred Tswana in the Transvaal.¹³

The British strongly discouraged the BaKgatla from entering the war, until the Boers crossed the border and looted stores at Mochudi and Mochudi railway station 12 miles northwest of the village. It was then that Linchwe told the British that he was ready to militarily assist in driving out the Boers. Linchwe, supported by British and Rhodesian forces from Mahalapye, retook Mochudi station in November 1899.¹⁴ When Colonel G.L. Holdsworth arrived with a mounted detachment of 100 men, Segale (Linchwe's fighting general) suggested an immediate joint attack on the Boer camp at Derdepoort.¹⁵ Surmon objected to the use of Protectorate Africans in combat outside the territory. However, when the attack commenced on 25 November, it was decided by Colonel Holdsworth that the BaKgatla should take the initiative and storm the laager.¹⁶ Despite being armed with a Maxim gun, the British troops withdrew minutes after the opening shots leaving the BaKgatla under Rramono and Segale to fight alone.¹⁷ The BaKgatla suffered seven or eight dead and 25 wounded, and the Boers, under the command of J.T. Kirsten, six dead and several wounded.¹⁸ The battle of Derdepoort

¹³Truschel, "Accommodation", 103.

¹⁴Ellenberger, "The Boer War," 4.

¹⁵Truschel, "Accommodation," 263.

¹⁶Ibid., 264; Ellenberger, "The Boer War," 5.

¹⁷The historical accounts differ on the reasons why Holdsworth withdrew. According to Sillery who took information from Ellenberger, Holdsworth argued that the BaKgatla had exceeded his instructions and thus he withdrew his men. Sillery, The Bechuanaland Protectorate, 92.

¹⁸There is some confusion on the numbers killed. One report stated 20 Boers were killed including 2 women. An account of this action is recorded in a diary kept by Ellenberger in the National Archives (Hist. MS ELI/1/2)

touched off a bitter conflict between the Boers and the BaKgatla. The SAR raised a diplomatic outcry in Europe over the use of Africans in what was intended as a "white man's war" and accused the BaKgatla of committing atrocities.¹⁹ Boer reprisals were not slow in coming; in December the Boers shelled the BaKgatla village of Sikwane and burned three other villages along the Madikwe (Marico River).²⁰ The BaKgatla, with British support and ammunition, counter-attacked Boer supply wagons²¹ and raided Boer farms for cattle.²² The BaKgatla guerrilla campaign against the Boers was effective. With the help of Segale, the British were able to move their armored train southward, and the Boers were forced to evacuate Derdepoort and Gaberones camp.

Ellenberger credits the BaKgatla for keeping the lines of communication open with Rhodesia in the early days of the war:

During the whole time of our advance to Mafeking, and even after the relief of that town, Lentswe had kept our lines of communication with the north open, one might say "from Gaberones to his boundary with the Bamangwato", and the other chiefs of the Territory were, at the time and to the end of the war, content to watch our progress and eager to render any assistance required of them. They collected hut tax from their people as usual and paid it in.²³

Because of their military efforts, the Kgafela Kgatla confirmed their loyalty to the British. In appreciation, the British recognized Linchwe as the paramount kgosi of the BaKgatla and granted his people a permanent reserve. The military campaigns of the BaKgatla exemplify African military organization and initiative within the British colonial context in southern Africa. Although not formerly under colonial control, African military forces were often used in offensive operations when military exigencies demanded a deviation from standard operating

¹⁹T. Pakenham, The Boer War, 425, 500, 601; F. Morton, Historical Dictionary, 11.

²⁰C.O. 417/283, Nicholson to Milner, 25 December 1899, enclosed in Milner to Chamberlain, 17 January 1900.

²¹Segale captured wagons full of ammunition on their way to Dutch troops in Bechuanaland. Plaatje, Native Life, 274-5.

²²The BaKgatla raided the western Transvaal almost to Pretoria and became rich in cattle. Ellenberger, "Boer War," 6.

²³*Ibid.*

procedures. In particular, Africans of the Protectorate were employed as scouts. "The use of African scouts was a marginal case in the unwritten conventional law of white warfare: it was considered not quite fair, and of course extremely unfair if the scouts were given arms," wrote Bethwell Ogot in his study of African participation in the war.²⁴ Smuts reports an instance in which an Afrikaner general had permitted African scouts to be armed, though he argued that this was an isolated incident, whereas British officers were more widely at fault.²⁵ Despite imperial concerns about arming African scouts, the BaTswana were also significant contributors to defensive operations, protecting the borders and important communication links between British imperial forces in the region.

Kgosi Khama of the BaNgwato knew that trouble between the Boers and the British might lead to war within the Protectorate. In July 1899 a Boer named Petrus Viljoen came to his new capital of Palapye and attempted to incite the BaNgwato against the imperial government. Khama remained loyal to the British stating:

You must not think that you can frighten me, and my people, with your war talk. You must know that I am a son of the white Queen. I do as they instruct me. If I find you in my country, I shall help to drive you out.²⁶

Despite rumors that the Boers wanted to attack Bechuanaland because it was used during the Jameson Raid, the British assumed the Protectorate was not a prime military objective because Boer military forces could not afford a two-front war. However, strategic resources within the Protectorate were threatened. If the telegraph and railway could be knocked out, then British relief forces coming south from Rhodesia would be hampered by lack of communication and transport.

²⁴Bethwell A. Ogot, War and Society in Africa (London: Frank Cass & Company Limited, 1974), 112. Ogot claims that the BaTswana were irritated when they were employed as scouts and then "accused of excessive zeal in their engagements with the Boers."

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Truschel, "Accommodation," 105.

Boer commandos invaded Khama's country and cut the telegraph line near Palapye on the first day of hostilities.²⁷ The railway between Gaberones and Mafeking became another prime target and armored trains patrolled the tracks to prevent Boer sabotage.²⁸ A week after the outbreak of the war, Khama sent his brother, Kebailele, and two regiments to guard the railway bridge at Mahalapye to the south. Eventually his men guarded the whole length of the railway through BaNgwato country.²⁹ Khama's capital of Palapye became a major defensive position manned by three to four thousand armed BaNgwato.³⁰

Not all the Protectorate's diKgosi responded enthusiastically to a war which they considered foreign in nature, a fact which caused some controversy among colonial officials. Most of the merafe favored the Imperial authorities, though some resumed old alliances with the Afrikaners. According to researcher Bethwell Ogot, "BaTswana intervention was neither encouraged nor influential, and is no more than an index of the peoples' attitudes; but even as an index it is of some significance."³¹ British colonial administrators demanded reciprocity from their subjects. If the empire was threatened, then all the subjects were also threatened. Support need not be in the form of military forces, but other services were expected. Kgosi Bathoen of the BaNgwaketse stationed men along the Protectorate's southern and eastern boundaries to guard against invasion, but they were never called to fight.³² According to Ellenberger, Bathoen was "very friendly and, throughout, did everything in his power to help."³³ In February 1900,

²⁷Tlou and Campbell, History, 167.

²⁸According to Ellenberger, the Boers had done a good deal of damage to the railway and it was a continual job to keep it repaired. "Boer War," 7.

²⁹Ibid., 169.

³⁰This was against Colonial Office policy but imperial troops were in short supply and the BaTswana were armed for their own defense.

³¹Bethwell Ogot, War and Society in Africa, 113.

³²I. Schapera, "A Short History of the Bangwaketse," African Studies vol. 1 (1942), 20.

³³Ellenberger, "The Boer War," 10.

Bathoen allowed Colonel H.O. Plumer to use Kanye as a supply depot for his thousand-man army then in route to the relief of Mafeking.³⁴

Perhaps one of the least supportive of the British cause was Sebele of the BaKwena. Since 1895 Kgosi Sebele had resisted British encroachment on the land and economy of the BaKwena. There is historical evidence that he may have tried to organize an armed rebellion against the British shortly before the war, but failed to win the support of his dikgosana.³⁵ Because of his lack of accommodation, complaints and on-going BaKwena dynastic struggles, Sebele had become very unpopular with the British. Matters at Molepolole reached a climax during the war. Sebele, unlike other Protectorate diKgosi, did not call out the BaKwena mophato when asked to make preparations to defend his reserve from Boer invaders.³⁶ The missionary stationed at Molepolole reported that his policy of ignoring Government orders would probably lead to his removal from the office of bogosi at the end of the war. Unlike the BaKgatla and the BaNgwato, Sebele in light of his past difficulties with the British saw no opportunity of resurrecting BaKwena power through the war.³⁷

However, between 1899-1902, the BaKwena remained quiet and generally sympathetic to the British cause.³⁸ In fact, according to local traders, Sebele is credited with deterring the Boers from acting

³⁴Kanye was about 70 miles from Mafeking. Plumer's testimony before the Royal Commission on the war in South Africa on March 12, 1903. Great Britain, Royal Commission on the War in South Africa, Minutes of Evidence, Vol. II, Cmd. 1791, 1903, 335. C.O. 417/284, Goold Adams to Milner, 81 H.C. of 26 July 1900, enclosed to Milner to Chamberlain, 590 of 6 August 1900; Ellenberger, "The Boer War," 7-10; Schapera, "Short History," 20.

³⁵Sebele had made threats while drunk and the Resident Commissioner had him placed under supervision at Francistown for six months. C.O. 417/257, Goold Adams to Milner, telegram of 28 May 1899, and Milner to Goold Adams, telegram of 29 May 1899, enclosed in Milner to Chamberlain, 387 of 20 June 1899. See Ramsay, "Rise and Fall," 284-285.

³⁶Truschel, "Accommodation," 218.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Ibid.; L.M.S., in letters, Africa South, B 58, Wookey to Thompson, 5 February 1900. L.M.S., reports, Africa South, 1900, B 3, Wookey, 5 January 1901.

on their threat to seize the stores at Molepolole. He also went out of his way to see to the personal safety of white residents during the early months of the conflict and encouraged his people to take advantage of the opportunities to supply material and labor for the British war effort³⁹

The South African War proved profitable for some BaTswana. The diKgosi quickly realized that money could be had by selling stock to the British forces. Government and European traders paid high prices for meat.⁴⁰ Reverend Williams estimated that by 1900 the BaTswana had earned £65,000.⁴¹ Money was also easily obtained by riding transport for the British or working at the army camps.⁴² Bathoen received £5 a day for the water Plumer's Column and its animals used from his dam.⁴³ According to Truschel, this minor economic boom, though not as dramatic or sizeable as the amount of war booty taken by the neighboring BaKgatla in their raids against the Boers and Africans in the Transvaal, provided an additional incentive for the diKgosi to cooperate with the British during the war.⁴⁴

Taken as a whole the conduct of the BaTswana, and especially of the BaKgatla and BaNgwato during the war, raised their prestige in the eyes of the British. African possession of weapons in highly visible military roles demonstrated the fact that they could exercise power and authority and responsibility. Conversely, African military units not only created a favorable impression among British army officers, but

³⁹The BaKwena supplied poles required by the military for barbed-wire fences, etc. Kgosi Sebele was paid a royalty for the poles. Ellenberger, "The Boer War," 16.

⁴⁰£30 for a big ox. The usual price before rinderpest was from £3 to £4 for a native cow and £5 for a big ox. Ellenberger, "The Boer War," 13.

⁴¹Tlou and Campbell, History, 169.

⁴²L.M.S., in letters, Africa South, B 58, H. Williams to Thompson, 11 May 1900. The BaNgwato were paid sixty-five thousand pounds for stock to be delivered to British forces. Khama also received a large sum in payment for his regiment's war service. L.M.S., in letters, Africa South, B 59, Willoughby to Thompson, 5 June 1901.

⁴³Ellenberger, "The Boer War," 10.

⁴⁴Truschel, "Accommodation," 107.

also helped to raise their own self-esteem. The BaTswana had played a significant role in protecting their borders against a major outside threat. The war also proved to be a socializing force of considerable importance. For the first time, the BaTswana could identify with something much larger than their merafe--the British empire. Although the soldiers were under merafe command and remained segregated, the diKgosi had volunteered regiments knowing full well that they were supporting British objectives and goals. This is not to say the diKgosi did not have their own motivations: Khama certainly hoped to gain political leverage with colonial authorities in return for his military support. The diKgosi and British colonial officials shared a mutual Afrikanerphobia. It was perhaps the first step in a transition to reciprocal relations of militarism and colonial protectionism within the Protectorate. This process would continue and grow during World War I.

The war of 1914-18 afforded the BaTswana another opportunity to support the British and widen their horizons, only this time on a global scale. On account of the enormous loss of life on the Western Front more and more voices were raised in Britain in 1916, advocating that Africans be enlisted to alleviate the threatening manpower shortage.⁴⁵ Silas Molema, an educated Barolong headman and lifelong advocate of African rights, quotes South African politicians who were against using armed blacks, especially in Europe:

The Empire must uphold the principle that a coloured man must not raise his hand against a white man if there is to be any law or order in either India, Africa, or any part of the Empire where the white man rules...That among other things the Government does not desire to avail itself of the services in a combatant capacity of citizens not of European descent in the present hostilities. Apart from other considerations, the present war is one which has its origins among the white peoples of Europe, and the Government is anxious to avoid the employment of coloured citizens in a war against whites.⁴⁶

⁴⁵Albert Grundlingh, Fighting Their Own War: South African Blacks and the First World War (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1987), 41.

⁴⁶S. Molema, The Bantu-Past and Present (Edinburgh: W. Green & Son, 1920), 298. Molema's father, Chief Molema, had been the founder of Mafeking. He occupied Mafeking in 1847 as a stronghold against Boer

After much discussion between South African and British military officials, an agreement was reached to utilize blacks only for non-combatant duties. Once the decision to recruit a black labor contingent had been taken by South Africa, General Botha dictated a "hands-off" policy to Great Britain regarding recruitment, organization and policies.⁴⁷ The Union government "desired to keep the contingent under their control so that the officers would be South Africans who knew the country".⁴⁸ Botha was explicit that the association of blacks "side by side with British soldiers who have not been accustomed to deal with them, is regarded as dangerous from the South African point of view".⁴⁹ The British, distracted by wider issues, had little choice but to grant South African authorities complete control over military plans and operations which involved Africans, including those from the High Commission Territories recruited for the South African Native Labor Contingent (SANLC).

The war had little impact on life within the Protectorate because the fighting occurred outside its boundaries. The fiercest and longest conflict was in German East Africa. There were only two occasions on which the territory was invaded--an incursion by Germans from South West Africa caused a mild stir on the western border and a band of Transvaal rebels entered the Protectorate from the east, but were quickly rounded up.⁵⁰ Kgosi Khama was given the task of guarding every crossing and

invasion. Silas Molema was a large landowner and had interests on both sides of the Bechuanaland Protectorate border. The family was known for being pro-British.

⁴⁷Ibid., 43. Botha was concerned that the imperial government could possibly bypass the Union authorities by enlisting blacks from the High Commission Territories. See also J.J. Collyer, The Campaign in German South West Africa 1914-15 (Pretoria: Government Printer, 1937), 83.

⁴⁸Ibid. citing Cape Times, 21 March 1917 ('Parliamentary Debates'); C.O. 616/64/54173, Colonial Office to Buxton, 29 August 1916; G.G./549/9/93/56, Buxton to Botha, 12 September 1916.

⁴⁹Ibid. citing Cape Times, 21 March 1917 ('Parliamentary Debates'); G.G. 547/9/93/120, Botha to Buxton, 2 April 1917.

⁵⁰Sillery, Botswana A Short Political History, 126. On 9 November 1914 a detachment of Germans raided the Bechuanaland Protectorate Police out-station at Kwanganane, about 27 miles from Rietfontein on the border of SW Africa. At the end of December 1914 a party of 13 rebels under

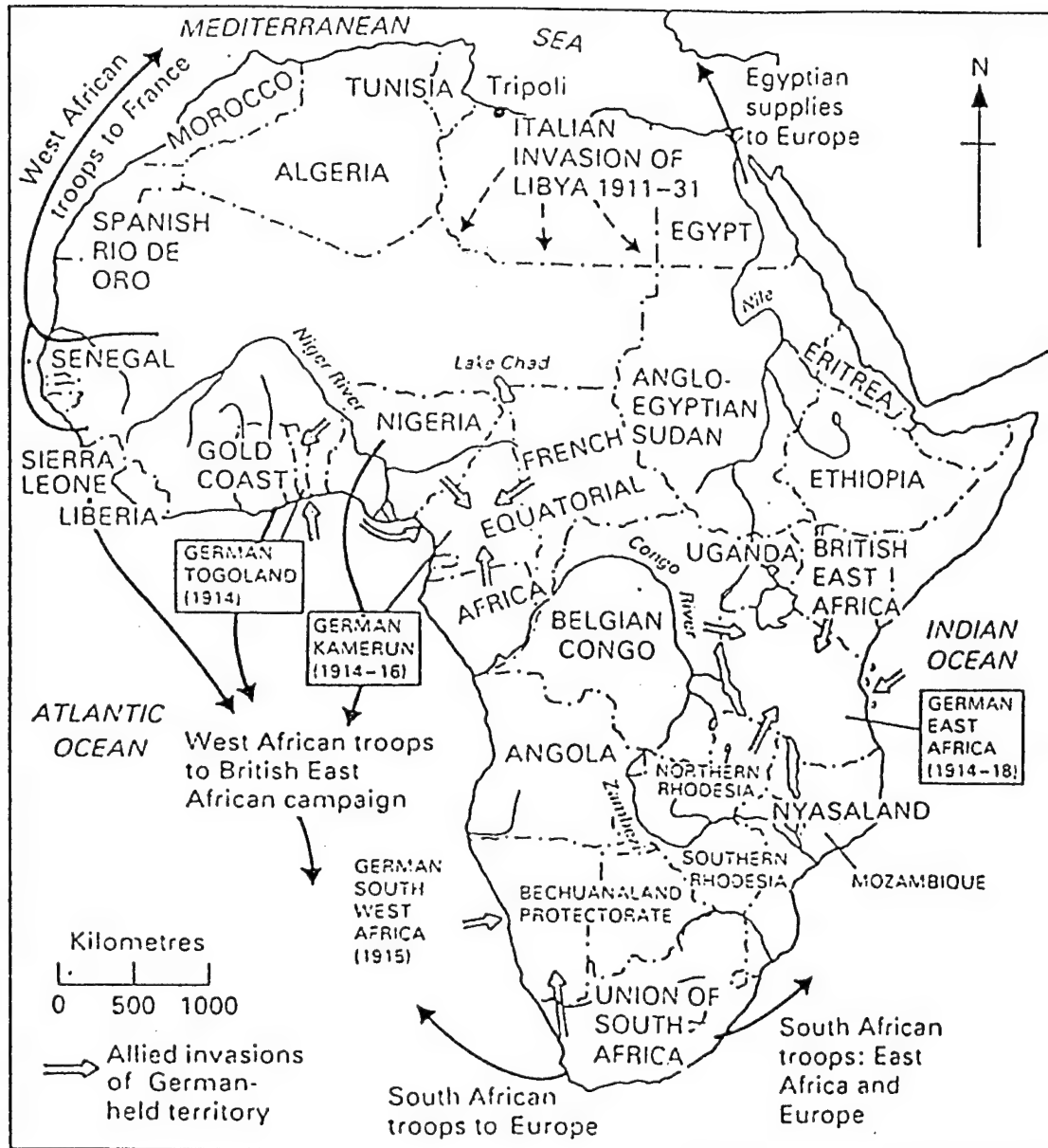
railway bridge on the Rhodesian trunk-line passing through Bechuanaland to Central Africa. Included in the guards, was a regiment of Bechuanaland Rifles which was an armed African contingent.⁵¹ Kqosi Linchwe furnished 20 men for patrol work with the Bechuanaland Protectorate Police on the Transvaal border, and he and Gaberone (the aged chief of the BaTlokwa) kept the authorities well informed; Baitlotle, the acting kqosi of the BamaLete, on receipt of a warning message from the Assistant Commissioner at Gaberone's, immediately summoned up his men and ordered detachments to proceed with all speed to guard railway bridges and culverts in his reserve.⁵²

one Jack Pienaar succeeded in crossing from the Transvaal into the Bamalete Reserve. Kqosi Gaseitsiwe had taken the field with as many of his men as he could mount and cornered the rebels until the Union Defense Force under du Plessis relieved him. See Charles Lucas, The Empire at War, 354-5.

⁵¹W.K. Hancock and J. Van Der Poel, eds. Selections from the Smuts Papers, Vol. 3 (Great Britain: Cambridge University Press, 1966), 219-20.

⁵²C. Lucas, Empire at War, 354.

THE FIRST WORLD WAR AND AFRICA, 1914-18



Kevin Shillington, History of Africa (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), 345.

The number of BaTswana volunteers who served during World War One was small compared to the thousands recruited in British East and West Africa to counter the German threat on the continent. According to South African sources, 1,326 men from Bechuanaland joined the SANLC.⁵³ Of that number, 555 BaTswana served in France including 203 BaNgwaketse, 127 Kgafela Kgatla, 74 BaKwena, 49 BamaLete, 32 BaTlokwa, and 70 from the Tati Native Reserve.⁵⁴ They formed part of a multi-ethnic labor force (consisting of Chinese, Japanese, Indian, Egyptian, Canadian, and British laborers, as well as German prisoners-of-war) who laid and repaired railway lines and roads, and lumbered in the French forests to provide the Allied forces with timber for construction.⁵⁵ Some worked at building hangars, quarrying stone, and general labor in engineers' stores. Most, however, were employed in the French harbors of Le Havre, Rouen, and Dieppe, where they unloaded ammunition, food supplies and timber, and transferred these to trains bound for the front.⁵⁶ The Kgafela Kgatla also supplied 312 men and the BamaLete 93 to assist South African forces in the occupation of German South West Africa from 1914-1915.⁵⁷ They were primarily employed to repair rail links destroyed by the Germans or as animal transport drivers.

In assessing the motives of African recruits who joined the SANLC, Albert Grundlingh offers a few insights. It is of considerable interest that a disproportionately large number of SANLC recruits were drawn from the Northern Transvaal. Senior officials estimated that between 60-66

⁵³Official Yearbook of the Union of South Africa. Vol. 3 (Pretoria: Government Printers, 1917), 378. 305 worked on railways in the Union, 686 were employed in SWA on railways, 303 were transport and remount workers and 32 were listed as general laborers. (The African population according to the Census of 1911 was 123,303).

⁵⁴C. Lucas, Empire at War, 357; Fred Morton, et al. Historical Dictionary, 137.

⁵⁵S. Molema, The Bantu-Past and Present, 299.

⁵⁶W.O. 107/37, History of the SANLC, 1918; Ilanga Lase Natal, 9 November 1917 (Letter from Capt. L.E. Hertslet).

⁵⁷C. Lucas, Empire at War, 357; Fred Morton, et al. Historical Dictionary, 137.

per cent of the total number were from this area.⁵⁸ By looking at their reasons for enlisting, we are also able to discern two factors which applied to BaTswana recruits as well. The first is the intense drought experienced in the northern districts during the war years.⁵⁹ This was the worst drought in 26 years,⁶⁰ and severely undermined the self-sufficiency of African peasants dependent on agriculture. Moreover, other avenues of employment were restricted.⁶¹ The British victory in the Anglo-Boer war had encouraged the South African mineowners to reduce the pre-war wages of black miners by 23 percent and to severely "clip" their earnings.⁶² Many migrants responded to the downturn in their working conditions on the Rand by simply refusing to return to mining occupations.⁶³ Importation of over fifty thousand Chinese on the Witwatersrand after 1904 also reduced the mining industry's reliance on foreign labor.⁶⁴ White farmers in the region were also paying their African workers lower wages. Some people were experiencing difficulty in paying the taxes imposed by municipal, provincial, and the central government. Consequently, military service was an option to those economically strapped in the Protectorate during this time.

It was not only the prevailing drought and lack of mining jobs in this region which helped recruitment, however. Despite declining economic conditions, South Africa experienced some difficulty in recruiting African volunteers for the SANLC. Conscription of Africans as a governmental policy had not been approved by law-makers. Informal

⁵⁸Grundlingh, Fighting Their Own War, 75.

⁵⁹Sir Charles Lucas mentions that there was drought in the Protectorate as early as 1914. Empire at War, 347.

⁶⁰East London Daily Dispatch, 2 October 1916 (Letter from G.K. Hemming).

⁶¹Grundlingh, Fighting Their Own War, 76 citing N.A. 99/568, Director of Native Labour to Secretary of Native Affairs, 22 March 1917.

⁶²Patrick Harries, Work, Culture, and Identity: Migrant Laborers in Mozambique and South Africa, c. 1860-1910 (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1994), 181.

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Ibid., 182.

conscription existed, however. It would appear that direct pressure was exerted by some Tswana chiefs on the African population to volunteer for military service:

The natives there [the northern Transvaal] no doubt are somewhat more under the control of their Chiefs, and the Chiefs there are more under control of the Government than elsewhere,...[and] the legitimate pressure by officials has produced a greater recruiting result than it has produced elsewhere.⁶⁵

As we know, colonial rule eroded the traditional balance of power between the BaTswana diKgosi, their advisors, and the kgotla, and some diKgosi had become increasingly authoritarian. As Shula Marks has demonstrated in the case of Solomon ka Dinuzulu, the Zulu king who died in 1934, a chief held an ambiguous position; to be successful, he had to be a shrewd reinterpreter of tradition and a skillful manipulator of people, white as well as black.⁶⁶ Supporting the British recruitment effort in Bechuanaland was one way in which the diKgosi received recognition from the administration while exercising a traditional prerogative to call up men for military service (one of the duties of the mephato). James M. Molebaloa, a high-ranking BaRolong at Mafeking, was concerned about the loyalty of his countrymen early in the war.

Writing to Ilanga Lase Natal, he offered his assistance:

Since the situation is growing serious in South Africa [the Boer rebellion], I offer the government my services on the "native" part. I suggest that I should travel throughout Bechuanaland, the Free State, and Thaba-Nechu to hold meetings with my country Chiefs and people and get them to be firm in their loyalty to the King and not to be misled by rebels.⁶⁷

His concern proved unfounded. All the diKgosi in the Protectorate remained quiet during the war giving their support to Britain, not to

⁶⁵Grundlingh citing Long Papers, 947/602/80, Buxton to Long, 28 July 1917.

⁶⁶Shula Marks, The Ambiguities of Dependence in Southern Africa: Class, Nationalism, and the State in Twentieth-Century Natal (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University, 1986).

⁶⁷James Molebaloa, Letter to the Editor. "Anglo-German War," Ilanga Lase Natal, 15 April 1915, 5.

the Germans or Boer sympathizers.⁶⁸ A pro-government leader, Seepapitso (BaNgwaketse), underscored his service to the Crown when he raised a war levy and sent hundreds to serve in the war.⁶⁹ Khama III of the BaNgwato along with the BaTawana (Kgosi Mathiba), BaNgwaketse (Kgosi Seepapitso II, Bathoen Gaseitsiwe), Kgafela Kgatla (Kgosi Linchwe), BaKwena (Kgosi Sechele II), and Damara (Kgosi Nicodemus) contributed a total of £3,967 to the war effort.⁷⁰

Cosmopolitan men in the Protectorate such as Kgosi Sebele who were fairly well educated and had travelled to South Africa may have been attracted to the adventure of joining the labor contingent and going to France. In fact, a great proportion of Africans who went overseas in the First World War from southern Africa were from the educated class. According to Albert Grundlingh, "educated blacks shared a common ideological outlook and at the time of the First World War the effects of their socialization were discernible in their support of the British Empire."⁷¹ He further argues that the value system of this class made them generally more responsive to the idea of serving the Empire, while the notion that service abroad was an educative experience, also struck a chord. Kgosi Sebele II and other educated BaKwena who joined the SANLC "were men who had passed through school and were anxious to see the world."⁷² Sebele shared the miseries of war with soldiers from around the globe and was given the honor of being presented before the

⁶⁸One indication of BaTswana loyalty is that nearly all the police were withdrawn from the Protectorate to serve with South African forces with no adverse effects. "A Tribute to the Natives," Ilanga Lase Natal, 23 April 1915, 5.

⁶⁹Morton and Ramsay, Birth of Botswana, 18. The BaNgwaketse sent the most men of any merafe.

⁷⁰C. Lucas, Empire at War, 358; S. Molema, The Bantu Past and Present (Cape Town: C. Struik, reprint 1963), 297.

⁷¹Fighting Their Own War, 77.

⁷²Morton and Ramsay, Birth of Botswana, 32. According to Lucas, 74 BaKwena volunteered. Empire at War, 357.

British Royal family while serving in France.⁷³ Soon after his return to Molepolole after the Armistice, he was called upon to occupy the office of bogosi.⁷⁴ According to Jeff Ramsay, Sebele returned from the war as a skeptic of "white civilization".⁷⁵

One reason why educated Africans returned home bitter about their military experiences overseas during the war was the confinement of African troops to special compounds in France even when off duty.⁷⁶ The compound system within South Africa had been created to protect mining interests.⁷⁷ Historian Frederick Cooper explains in his study of Mombasa dock workers that British colonial officials controlled workers through a "narrowing of the spatial arena", separating those in the 'capitalist domain' from the undisciplined work culture outside.⁷⁸ As discussed earlier, military officials feared that African soldiers would be contaminated by liberal influences in war-torn French towns. Compounds functioned to regulate and discipline a military labor force unused to the more open racial climate of Europe. Like the closed compounds on the mines at Kimberley, South Africa, military compounds became a physical space used as an instrument of "social and psychological distancing".⁷⁹ When some black troops (not from the Protectorate) mutinied against limitations on their freedom to socialize, all black

⁷³African newspapers were filled with the war-time exploits of Indian troops enrolled in the British army and blacks from North and West Africa who fought with the French. Grundlingh, Fighting Their Own War, 50.

⁷⁴Julian Mockford, Seretse Khama and the Bamangwato (London: Staples Press, 1950), 75.

⁷⁵Morton and Ramsay, Birth of Botswana, 32.

⁷⁶Of all the Allied labor contingents in France-both white and "non-European"- the SANLC was the only one to be housed in compounds. Only the German prisoners-of-war, who were regarded as a source of forced labor, were likewise confined. Grundlingh, Fighting Their Own War, 106.

⁷⁷Harries, Work, Culture, and Identity, 112.

⁷⁸Frederick Cooper, 'Colonizing time: work rhythms and labor conflict in colonial Mombasa', in Nicholas Dirks (ed.), Colonialism and Culture (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992), 209-11.

⁷⁹Grundlingh, Fighting Their Own War, 105; C. van Onselen, Chibaro: African Mine Labour in Southern Rhodesia, 1900-1933 (London, 1976), 157.

units from southern Africa were discharged early.⁸⁰ It had become increasingly difficult for the military to maintain discipline in the closed compounds; there had been a riot in July 1917 in which at least 13 people had died.⁸¹ African soldiers were also expressing their dissatisfaction with military life through refusing food, "minor strikes" and other acts of violence. According to Grundlingh, SANLC military reports suggest that African resistance was a recurrent and worrisome problem for military commanders.⁸² The South African government decided to stop recruiting for the SANLC in January 1918 because of the disturbances. The military's use of racially segregated units and closed compounds remained an instrument of a divide-and-rule strategy throughout the period. The legacy of resistance to colonial domination within military structures provided a historical precedence for soldiers' grievances in the Second World War. Owing to its geographical position, the Protectorate did not, except at Kwanganene on its western border, experience any of the horrors of the war which befell soldiers and support personnel in South West Africa and East Africa. From a financial point of view, the territory may even be said to have benefited through the war in terms of employment. Like other parts of southern Africa, however, it felt some of the after effects of the war, especially as regards the increased cost of labor, food-stuffs, and other necessities of life.⁸³ An unhappy sequel to the war was the spread to the Protectorate of the influenza epidemic that swept the world in 1918-1919.

BaTswana soldiers who had enlisted with the SANLC were immediately demobilized upon returning to South Africa. Veterans received very little official recognition for their war-time service; they received no war medals or gratuities from the South African government. Despite the

⁸⁰Grundlingh, Fighting Their Own War, 114-121.

⁸¹Ibid.

⁸²Ibid., 110-111.

⁸³Lucas, Empire at War, 359.

fact that SANLC soldiers resented their post-war treatment, their experiences in Europe brought certain intangible benefits--their first exposure to foreign peoples, places and ideas. On a personal and individual level some veterans came back with greater self-esteem and confidence. Albert Grundlingh argues that these new attitudes were rarely transferred into increased militancy after the war,⁸⁴ but nonetheless war experiences became part of the collective memory of BaTswana families. While most ex-servicemen returned to their rural lifestyle, they remained informed citizens about military life. Intimate knowledge of colonial recruiting practices, military training requirements, and life away from home under South African leadership were shared with family members and the merafe. When war erupted in Europe less than twenty years later, sacrifices made by BaTswana soldiers in World War One led to the dikgosi demanding recognition and greater autonomy for their military units in the war against Nazi Germany.

II. Political and Military Reactions to the Outbreak of the Second World War in Bechuanaland and South Africa

When war broke out in September 1939, the Protectorate government was interested in reassuring itself that the BaTswana backed the British government in this new conflict. The Resident Commissioner, Charles Nobel Arden-Clarke, informed the diKgosi that war had been declared and requested a "guarantee of their loyalty" to the British government. Such requests were routine procedure all over the empire, where subject peoples had no real say in how things were run.⁸⁵ Each of the principal BaTswana diKgosi responded with positive statements pledging the loyalty of the merafe.⁸⁶ Perhaps the most enthusiastic response was from Kgosi Bathoen (BaNgwaketse):

⁸⁴Grundlingh, Fighting Their Own War, 124-130.

⁸⁵Morton and Ramsay, Birth of Botswana, 103.

⁸⁶Reasons for their loyalty will be discussed in the following chapter.

The Bangwaketse are a very small people in the British Empire but we cannot be at ease when our Mother country (England) is at War with her enemies...We will do whatever is within our means...just as we did in the Great War of 1914-1918 by contributing money, sending recruits overseas...My people in the meeting rose up to say 'God Save the King' and from the very bottom of my heart, I say that was not merely echoed in Kgotla on the spur of the moment but that it will be our daily prayer.⁸⁷

Kgosi Kgari Sechele (BaKwena) also pledged his support, "May God help you overcome your enemies--Pula! Pula! Pula!".⁸⁸ Tshekedi Khama (BaNgwato) sent a similar message. The BaNgwato had nothing to offer except themselves, he stated, and they were placing themselves entirely at the disposal of "His Majesty the King".⁸⁹ Subsequently, Resident Commissioner Arden-Clarke organized a meeting for 7 September in Mafeking inviting the eight principal diKgosi to discuss war measures to be adopted in the Protectorate.

Arden-Clarke explained during the meeting that there was little immediate danger to the Protectorate. It was possible, but unlikely, that small raiding parties composed of Germans or neo-Nazi Afrikaners from South Africa or South West Africa⁹⁰ might attempt to enter the territory in order to damage or destroy the railways, but the police were assigned to handle internal security measures.⁹¹ The police would be increased if needed, and every white citizen was to undertake a course on elementary military training in order to be prepared. This training included drill and musketry, and instruction in the Bren gun and bombing. All women, too, were needed for war fund activities,

⁸⁷BNA S 134/1 Box No. 134 War with Germany, Natives Expressions of Loyalty, Letter from Chief Bathoen to District Commissioner dated 5 September 1939.

⁸⁸"Pula" means rain but it is also used in exclamations of excitement or praise.

⁸⁹Ibid. All eight expressions of loyalty are quoted in this source. Kgosi Mmusi (BaKgatlana) reminded the Resident Commissioner of the important role his people played in 1899 and in the Great War.

⁹⁰See Helmuth Stoecker ed., German Imperialism in Africa (London: C. Hurst & Company, 1986), 390ff.

⁹¹BNA S. 120/9 Box No. 120, War with Germany-Recruitment Operations in Bechuanaland Protectorate.

making comforts for the troops and medical necessities for the wounded.⁹²

He stressed that the merafe were not to take up arms unless the government gave them permission. The diKgosi were asked to cooperate in the prevention of local crimes as most of the police were employed in their new duties or enlisting for service overseas. War-related legislation dealing with public safety, censorship, and rationing of key resources (primarily petrol) were explained.

For the time being, no BaTswana would be recruited for military service. It was stressed that their immediate contribution was in the realm of agriculture. The Resident Commissioner explained, "It is the duty of the country to do all it can to increase production".⁹³ Surplus food grown on the masotla (war lands designated by the kgosi) was to be sold to decrease the colonial burden of the Protectorate on Britain. Economic self-sufficiency was considered important during this time of troubles for the British government. The granaries were filled with communal reserves of grain to be used for export to neighboring countries, so that food imports from territories nearer the war zones could be diverted to troops. Thus while the cost of many goods increased in the Protectorate during the war, the people were required to sacrifice their time and effort to produce more for the survival of the empire. In some instances, food production on family lands fell because of this new policy and the people suffered.

The first official war newsletter distributed from Mafeking to colonial centers of administration was printed on 9 September 1939. It expounded on the empire's total effort against Hitler, the European aggressor "without honour" who destroyed the freedom of the German people and attacked smaller, weaker nations.⁹⁴ Propaganda of this nature

⁹²Ibid.

⁹³BNA S 134/1 Box No. 134 War with Germany 1939. Summary of the Proceedings of the Meeting of the Chiefs with the Resident Commissioner at Mafeking on 7th September 1939.

⁹⁴Ibid. "Newsletter dated 9 September 1939."

was aimed at whites and educated Africans. It is safe to assume that many BaTswana initially knew very little about the causes of the war. Hitler and his military conquests in Europe were far removed from rural Bechuanaland. Kgosi Kgari Sechele II (BaKwena) remarked, "that his people did not realize the importance of the war, nor that the government needed help from the merafe."⁹⁵ The great majority were illiterate, and those who had gone to primary school had little knowledge or understanding of international politics. Simon Molema, an educated African writer, held this very critical, condescending view: "the average Muntu cares little and knows less about politics, and is generally incapable of forming an independent opinion on legislative matters unless it has been fully explained to him, its benefits extolled or its dangers magnified, and, in fact, an opinion suggested to him by one or other of the Bantu leaders, who are thus rather the advocates than mouthpieces of their people."⁹⁶ Molema was referring to legislative measures within local kgotlas, but the same could be said for the formulation of opinions on international events. Bechuanaland was a colonial island surrounded on three sides by countries dominated by a white minority which preferred to keep Africans ignorant about European affairs. Another African writer argued that the African masses in Bechuanaland were indifferent to a war whose implications they could not understand.⁹⁷ However, even within the rural regions of Bechuanaland there were men who knew about war--the veterans of previous conflicts. African opinions about the war were also articulated in newspaper articles, law courts, governmental and non-governmental reports.

⁹⁵BNA S 136/1 War with Germany. Letter from Sechele to the District Commissioner dated 27 May 1941.

⁹⁶S. Molema, The Bantu-Past and Present, 305.

⁹⁷Kiyaga-Mulindwa, "The Bechuanaland Protectorate and the Second World War," The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History, XII (3 May 1984), 33. Margaret Ballinger pointed out the same phenomena in South Africa, "With few exceptions, the African people were simply not interested in the war," From Union to Apartheid (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1969), 115.

Recognizing that educated African writers were influenced by their educational experiences and colonial sources are somewhat biased, some attitudes, motives and cultural values regarding the war can be gleaned from them.

Shortly after hostilities commenced, African newspapers such as the The Bantu World and Umsebenzi began to publish pictures of armed Ethiopian soldiers and articles outlining fascist doctrine.⁹⁸ Among black elites and those who could read, it was generally accepted that the African masses were anti-fascist.⁹⁹ Black South African writers were particularly prolific about the consequences of an allied defeat, "Africans would be exploited for the enrichment of those who wielded the sceptre of power."¹⁰⁰ Further, "no black man would be allowed to develop his life to the full; he would be kept down and forced to work without compensation. Under Nazism, freedom of religion would be abolished."¹⁰¹ To educated Africans in southern Africa, it was quite clear that only a British victory would ensure freedom and progress for Africa: "victory for Hitler means to Africa and Africans not only enslavement but a return to the abyss of darkness which for centuries held our race in the bondage of ignorance and superstition."¹⁰² Bishop Clayton of Johannesburg explained it very clearly to his parishioners:

The totalitarian states have a philosophy which is quite incompatible with Christian doctrine. The individual is to them a being without rights. There is no room for a minority. There is no room for any freedom of thought. If the individual belongs to the right race, or the right class, and if he is useful to that State or class, then he shall be looked after.

⁹⁸According to Edward Roux, Bantu newspapers experienced an unprecedented boom in sales during the war. Time Longer Than Rope (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1948, 1964), 302.

⁹⁹Burger, Black Man's Burden, 234; The New Leader, Vol. XXXII no. 49, 15 February 1941, 2. "All colonial peoples, regardless of their ideology--feudalist, capitalist, nationalist or socialist--hate and loathe Fascism and all it symbolizes. To that extent they support the struggle against the German and Italian dictators, for they know only too well what dictatorship means to them."

¹⁰⁰"African War Efforts," The Bantu World (Johannesburg), Saturday, October 26, 1940, 4.

¹⁰¹Ibid.

¹⁰²Ibid.

He has no rights as a man, but only just in so far as he is a member of a party or a member of a class. And, as for God, he must see the doing of God's will in the inspiration and action of his leader.¹⁰³

The doctrines of racial hatred incorporated into Nazism and Fascism were thus fairly well known among a small group of educated blacks in the region.¹⁰⁴ Despite the fact that many Afrikaners they came in contact with sympathized with the German war cause, it was shocking news to learn that Jews in Germany were discriminated against despite their white complexions.¹⁰⁵ It was recognized that if such feelings of hatred were felt towards white Jews; how much worse would it be for black men. Kingsley Mbadiwe wrote a political treatise in 1942 which discussed African fears during the period:

Since Jews, of the same color and bearing as the Germans, are made to experience tortures, there can be no doubt that the African, totally different from these people, will not only be sterilized according to Hitler's will, but stand in danger of total extermination.¹⁰⁶

There was also little doubt about Germany's imperial ambitions; Africans in the region had experienced German abuses in the past wrote an author in The Bantu World.¹⁰⁷ In Bechuanaland, there were many on the western border who had taken in Herero refugees during the extermination campaigns led by the Germans in South West Africa between 1904-07.¹⁰⁸ Ex-servicemen who had fought against the Germans in 1914 retained vivid memories of the harsh treatment meted out to Africans.

With the fall of France in June 1940, Great Britain lost a

¹⁰³"British Victory Only Hope," Bantu World, 21 September 1940, 4.

¹⁰⁴Kingsley O. Mbadiwe, British and Axis Aims in Africa (New York: Wendell Malliet and Company, 1942), 115-132.

¹⁰⁵Pro-German groups in South Africa were the most vociferous advocates of keeping the black man down. Malan's "purified" Nationalists, the Grey Shirts and Pirow's New Order, were all committed to a policy of racial discrimination. Roux, Time Longer Than Rope, 304.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., 117.

¹⁰⁷How Germany Ruled Africans in the Past," The Bantu World, 11 May 1940, 4.

¹⁰⁸At Mahalapye, there was a substantial community of Herero refugees under their Chief, Frederick Maherero. Michael Crowder, "Tshekedi Khama, Smuts and South West Africa," The Journal of Modern African Studies, 25, I (1987), 29.

strategic foothold on the European continent and strong military ally.¹⁰⁹ British Expeditionary Forces were ordered to march to the coast and evacuate by sea. It looked as if Great Britain would lose practically its whole army including the professional officers who would be needed to rebuild a new invasion force at a later time.¹¹⁰ Winston Churchill, faced with the combined forces of Hitler and Mussolini, appealed for greater colonial support. Churchill stressed the colonial values of brotherhood, sacrifice, and service. Through radio programs broadcast over networks throughout Africa and elsewhere, educated elites in Bechuanaland heard the following message and passed the news to their families and merafe:

It all depends now upon the whole strength of the British race in every part of the world, of all our associated people, of all our well-wishers in every land doing their utmost night and day, giving all, daring all, enduring all to the utmost, to the end.

There is no war of chieftains or of princes, of dynasties or national ambitions--it is a war of peoples. There are vast numbers not only in this island, but in every land who will render faithful service in this war, but whose names will never be known, whose deeds will never be recorded. This is a war of unknown warriors. Let us all strive without failing in strength or duty and the dark curse of Hitler will be lifted from our age.¹¹¹

In response, men from all over the empire enlisted by the thousands in the imperial forces. Australians, Maoris from New Zealand, Malaysians, Jews and Arabs, Egyptians, Indians, and Africans rallied behind the British. The East African colonies had been preparing for war ever since the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1935.¹¹² Italian military strength in East Africa was assessed at a total of some 200,000

¹⁰⁹Canada and South Africa both desired to remain neutral in a war with Germany and did not deploy troops prior to 1940.

¹¹⁰Gerhard L. Weinberg, A World At Arms: A Global History of World War II (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 130.

¹¹¹BNA S. 120/9 Box No. 120, War with Germany. Text of radio speech broadcast in the Protectorate on 13 July 1940.

¹¹²Only preparations in East Africa are mentioned here as they directly impacted on development in southern Africa. For a discussion of events in West Africa, see Peter B. Clarke, West Africans at War (London: Ethnographica, 1986) and Haywood and Clarke, The History of the Royal West African Frontier Force (Great Britain: Gale & Polden LTD., 1964).

metropolitan and colonial troops and in order to meet this new threat, additional regiments of the King's African Rifles were recruited in Nyasaland, Kenya and Uganda.¹¹³ The Somaliland Camel Corps, re-equipped with trucks and machine-guns, patrolled the frontier between British and Italian Somaliland. One battalion of the King's African Rifles in Tanganyika was brought up to strength and made ready to move to British Somaliland if necessary. Preparations continued throughout East Africa, and in 1939 an overall war strategy had been worked out for the campaign against the Italians; manpower shortages made that strategy difficult to implement. The British had deployed only 40,000 troops, most of them local, and 100 aircraft.¹¹⁴ Despite British concerns regarding South African neutrality, reinforcements of manpower and aircraft to East Africa were expected to come from South Africa; fully equipped and armed regiments from West Africa had already been deployed against German positions in northern Kenya.¹¹⁵ However, South Africa was less prepared to enter the fray than the other mobilized British colonies in the north. Additionally, the political controversy over the employment of black combatants against white soldiers, regardless of ethnic background, was central in the minds of most Afrikaners. Historically, the issue had never been fully resolved.

British colonial officials and the diKgosi in the Bechuanaland Protectorate realized that their fate was closely tied to what transpired in South Africa. If mobilization proceeded as it had during World War One, Bechuanaland and the other High Commissioned Territories would be expected to supply manpower to South African military units. As events unfolded during the first months of the war, it looked as if history was indeed going to repeat itself.

¹¹³A. Clayton, The British Empire as a Superpower, 317.

¹¹⁴John Keegan, The Second World War (New York: Penguin Group, Viking Division, 1989), 321.

¹¹⁵*Ibid.*, 319; Two regiments of RWAFF from the Gold Coast and Nigeria were in East Africa by 3 August 1940. See Bantu World, 3 August 1940, front page news.

The first German shots in Poland triggered a major political crisis in South Africa. The Cabinet of the United Party Government met to consider the war issue, only to split virtually down the middle. Six ministers, including Prime Minister General J.B.M. Hertzog, favored a declaration of neutrality. Seven ministers, chief among them Minister of Justice General Smuts, wanted an immediate declaration of war against Germany. When the vote was finally taken, by 80 to 67 the House of Assembly resolved that the Union sever its relations with Germany and "refuse to adopt an attitude of neutrality" in the conflict between Britain and Germany. It further resolved that the Union carry out obligations to friends and associates in the British Commonwealth of Nations and that "the Union should take all necessary measures for the defence of its territory and South African interests, and the Government should not send forces overseas as in the last war."¹¹⁶ The following day Hertzog resigned his office, and Smuts became Prime Minister. War was then promptly declared on Germany.

The Afrikaner constituency was extremely critical of Smuts' implementation of "war measures" and resisted him at every turn.¹¹⁷ From the beginning of increased tensions in Europe, there had been rumors of a rebellion by the Nationalists who were sympathetic to the German cause.¹¹⁸ They were set against any active participation in a war in

¹¹⁶South African Debates, 4 September, 1949, col. 31. Emphasis added.

¹¹⁷M. Roberts and A.E.G. Trollip, The South African Opposition, 1939-1945: An essay in contemporary history (London: Longmans, Green & Co, 1947), intro.

¹¹⁸D.W. Kruger, The Making of a Nation (Johannesburg and London: Macmillan, 1969), 204. The bitterness of one Nationalist was reflected in this entreaty: "We are actually expected to be pro-British in our hearts, or otherwise we are not good citizens, and we refuse to allow ourselves to be domineered in that way...We are going to retain our free Boer hearts in this country...You say that we are Nazis, but you do not prove it, but in connection with your internment camps, you are acting in the same spirit as Hitler." Debates, January 29, 1940, col. 553 (Rev. C.W.M. Du Toit).

which South Africa was not militarily threatened.¹¹⁹ The Afrikaans press was critical of the wording of the General Service Oath (later called the Red Oath) which pledged allegiance to His Majesty King George VI.¹²⁰ Low volunteer rates hampered Smut's mobilization efforts. Riots and attacks on civilians and soldiers on leave from the various camps near Johannesburg and Pretoria were frequent.¹²¹

For Smuts there would be little time to worry about internal political squabbles; the war was spreading to Africa. On 16 March 1940 General Sir Archibald Wavell, Commander-in-Chief (C-in-C) Middle East, flew to South Africa to see Smuts about sending troops to Kenya.¹²² Smuts agreed to raise a brigade and three squadrons of aircraft for service in Kenya.¹²³ While Europe puzzled over the "Phony War," Italy contemplated joining the fray. On 10 June Italy declared war on Britain, and allied itself with Nazi Germany against a prostrate France. South Africa was now at war with Fascist Italy. Smuts took inventory of South Africa's state of military readiness.¹²⁴ He was not pleased with what he found--South Africa was completely unprepared for war.¹²⁵ The

¹¹⁹This policy was outlined by Mr Oswald Pirow, Minister of Defense, in 1935 when he stated the Union would never participate in any precisely laid-out imperial defense scheme and that even a declaration of war by the Sovereign did not automatically involve South Africa. A. Clayton, The British Empire as a Superpower, 308; H.J. Martin and Neil Orpen, South Africa at War (Cape Town, Johannesburg & London: Purnell, 1979), 7.

¹²⁰Novelist Alan Paton in Too Late the Phalarope (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953) tells the story of a young, small-town Afrikaner who, during the war, took the Red Oath and afterwards joined the Police.

¹²¹Martin and Orpen, South Africa at War, 101.

¹²²Ibid., 60.

¹²³John Keegan, The Second World War, 321. The force was led by Dan Pienaar a veteran of the Boer War against the British.

¹²⁴See: J.S.M. Simpson, South Africa Fights (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1941), 94-101; and W.K. Hancock, Smuts: The Fields of Force, 1919-1950. Vol. II (Cambridge: University Press, 1968), 328-32.

¹²⁵BNA S. 120/9 Box No. 120, War with Germany: Recruitment Operations.

Army and the Air Force were under strength.¹²⁶ There was no navy, though the South African Naval Service did still exist, with a full complement of three officers and three ratings.¹²⁷ Immediately, a vigorous recruiting campaign was mounted to create an all-volunteer force. Full mobilization for war, whether for the defense of British colonies or South African interests, required the utilization of African manpower. In a country with only a limited white population, so many volunteer brigades and units could not possibly be maintained without the assistance from the black population of South Africa and the HCT, and in view of the fact that levels of education and technical knowledge placed the whites automatically in the "leadership" class, it was militarily self-evident that the lower ranks would have to be reinforced with African recruits.¹²⁸ Since a majority of white opinion was against the arming of Africans, Smuts decided to reform the Cape Corps (2 Divisional Signals Company and 1 and 3 Brigade Signals Companies) and organize a new "Native Labour Corps".¹²⁹ Recruitment commenced on 1 June 1940 under the auspices of the Non-European Army Services. Later in the war, Smuts declared himself ready to enlist non-Europeans for combatant service as needed, "If it comes to a question of defending South African territory against the Japanese menace, [I] will

¹²⁶South Africa, with a Permanent Force of only 353 officers and 5,033 other ranks was in a sorry plight. Martin and Orpen, South Africa at War, 27.

¹²⁷The Royal Navy operated out of Simonstown and was under the command of a Second Lieutenant! Only two trawlers, *Crassula* and *Kommetje* were outfitted for minesweeping. Ibid., 20, 29.

¹²⁸Martin and Orpen, South Africa at War, 59; Kathryn Jean Gibbs, "Demobilisation After World War II: The Process and Politic of Reinstating Union Defence Force Volunteers into Civilian Life, 1943-1948," History Honours Paper, University of South Africa, January 1990, page 13 gives these figures: Out of an estimated population of 11,416,000, a total of only 345,029 men and women enlisted. Of these, 197,875 were white males; 24,640 white females; 45,783 Cape Corps and Indian and Malay Corps; and 76,731 Native Military Corps.

¹²⁹Ibid.

arm every African or Coloured soldier that is available."¹³⁰ He had no chance of getting Parliament, or even his own Cabinet, to accept such a revolutionary proposal.

Opposition leaders, such as Defense Minister, Mr. O. Pirow, and the Chief of the South African General Staff, Sir Pierre van Ryneveld, constantly attacked Smuts for enlisting Africans even as non-combatants.¹³¹ General Ryneveld strongly believed that only Europeans should receive military training for service outside Africa.¹³² They attacked Smuts for bringing non-Europeans into the war industries, or into employment of any kind where the concept of labor efficiency conflicted with their concept of race relationships. All these separate attacks supported the main attack against Smuts for dragging South Africa into the war.

British policy-makers tried to avoid a confrontation in South Africa by allowing General Smuts to maneuver through the political rapids of dissent.¹³³ In fact the British War Office had supported Pirow and General Ryneveld in earlier discussions surrounding the use of Africans outside the continent of Africa in a war against Germany.¹³⁴ During late 1939 and early 1940 the British Cabinet agreed with

¹³⁰In March 1942, Smuts declared that if the Japanese attacked the Union, he would arm "Natives and Coloureds" for the defense of the country. W.K. Hancock, Smuts: The Fields of Force, 370; Donald Molteno, "Arming African Soldiers," The Bantu World, 21 March 1942, 4.

¹³¹Senator J.D. Rheinallt Jones, Race Relations (Johannesburg) Vol. 5 (1938), 27.

¹³²General Ryneveld's extraordinary influence on military planning and mobilization during the war resulted in "inevitably ill-considered decisions best illustrated by extraordinary waste of non-white manpower throughout the war and their limitation to a non-combatant role against the intentions of Smuts". Martin and Orpen, South Africa at War Vol. 7, forward.

¹³³The influence of Smuts on the Colonial Office was profound. There were many occasions when the British government felt impelled to modify their plans based on recommendations of white leaders in each territory. J. Hatch, History of Britain in Africa, 237.

¹³⁴Jack Spence reminds us that prior to WWII there were few critics at the international level who questioned that South Africa had the authority over the various national groups within South Africa and was therefore legally and morally qualified to make decisions on their behalf especially when defense issues were involved. Oxford History of South Africa, 525.

MacDonald, the Colonial Secretary, that African colonial forces should only be used for local defense. In a memorandum to the Cabinet, MacDonald cited military objections to using African troops in France, even as pioneers, and political objections to their employment on garrison work in the Middle East.¹³⁵ As manpower shortages became critical, the British War Office changed its tune and South Africa was asked to make concessions.

When Smuts declared that South Africa's responsibility as defined in the Defence Act of 1912 extended as far north as the Equator (even perhaps "anywhere South of the Sudan"), the British in the interest of allied cooperation took what they could get.¹³⁶ It was essential from a British perspective that South African forces immediately reinforce the allied effort in East Africa. Smuts agreed to despatch infantry and air forces to Kenya in July 1940. On their arrival in East Africa the following message from the King was read to the South African troops:

Once again forces from the Union of South Africa have come to East Africa to take part with other members of the British Commonwealth in the fight for the future of their own country and for the safety of all freedom-loving peoples. As you enter the field of war I send you my best wishes, confident that with your help our cause will triumph.¹³⁷

South Africa was reluctantly now committed militarily for the duration of the war. Smuts eventually committed South African troops (black and white) to the North African, the Middle East and European campaigns. Their commitment and record of service on behalf of the Allied cause is a matter of record.¹³⁸

¹³⁵CAB 65/1/53 (39) 3, War Cabinet meeting, 19 Oct. 1939; CAB 67/4 W.P. (G) (40) 15, secret memo. by MacDonald on "Utilization of the manpower resources of the Colonial Empire", 22 Jan. 1940; and War Cabinet meetings of 15 Jan., 25 Jan. and 15 April 1940.

¹³⁶South African Debates, 7 February, 1940, col. 991; A. Clayton, The British Empire as a Superpower, 311. Military necessity eventually required South African forces as far afield as Europe.

¹³⁷"The King's Message," The Bantu World, 3 August 1940, front page.

¹³⁸During WWII, South African forces fought in East and North Africa and in Italy. At war's end, 218,260 South Africans were in uniform: 135,171 white men, 12,878 white women, 27,583 Coloured men, and 42,627 African men. All were volunteers. Of that number, 5,500 South Africans were killed during the war. See Jennifer Crwys-Williams, A Country at

As mentioned earlier, the mobilization plans formulated in South Africa impacted on military policy and preparations in Bechuanaland. Archival material both in London and Botswana indicate that the High Commissioner at Cape Town, along with the Resident Commissioners, were influential in shaping military policy regarding mobilization and the employment of Africans during the war. Taking South Africa's lead, colonial administrators in the Protectorate offered to recruit volunteers for the South African Native Military Corps (SANMC) and other security forces in South Africa. The High Commissioner, Lord Harlech, addressing the BaTswana diKgosi in July 1940, was completely supportive of this effort:

There is no opportunity at present for service in Europe. But when native units are needed for service in the Union or in other parts of Africa, we shall try to arrange for the Territories to have the opportunity of taking part. The Imperial Government does not at present wish us to raise a separate unit.¹³⁹

Thus, both Basutoland and Bechuanaland contributed to early military efforts organized in South Africa. The first group which received reinforcements was the South African Native Police Force.

At the outbreak of war in 1939, no immediate attempt had been made to recruit Africans to act in any capacity in the South African armed forces. By 1940, however, it became clear to the government that many whites were protecting various essential services within the country. Such duties, it was decided, could well be carried out by Africans. The government accordingly decided to recruit 4,000 blacks for the purpose of guarding such places within the Union as they thought necessary to protect. In the past, the Police Force in South Africa was composed of both Europeans and Africans.¹⁴⁰ The African members of the Force, although they did not handle rifles, underwent the same peace-time

War 1939-1945 (Cape Town: Ashanti Publishing (Pty) Ltd., 1992).

¹³⁹BNA S 135/7 War with Germany. Letter from C.N.A. Clarke to Chief Tshekedi and Chief Bathoen, dated 7 April 1941.

¹⁴⁰In 1939 there were 7,754 Europeans and 3,676 non-Europeans. Official Yearbook of the Union of South Africa, No. 22 (1941), 390.

training as European members.¹⁴¹ It was made clear from the beginning that blacks would not be equipped with rifles; their arms were those normally carried by the black police, namely a short assegai and knobkerries.¹⁴² During the war, their duties were focused on the maintenance of law and order, securing vital installations, and the prevention of sabotage in the Union.¹⁴³ Recruiting for the Native Military Police Force was stopped in the Protectorate when the Director for Non-European Services (S.A.) organized the Native Military Guard.

In July 1940 authority was received to create four battalions of Native Military Guards. Zulus from Natal were intended to form the first battalion, northern Transvaal blacks for the second battalion, Xhosa from the Transkei for the third and Africans from the urban areas for the Witwatersrand Battalion.¹⁴⁴ Initially, recruiting blacks for the Military Guards did not do well. The quota of 4,000 was eventually filled, mainly with recruits from the northern Transvaal and High Commissioned Territories, including Bechuanaland. The lack of response and resentment regarding pay and allowances offered to the Guards, led to a unit for Africans organized on proper military lines, with uniforms, pensions and disability allowances.¹⁴⁵ This was called the Native Military Corps (SANMC).

In November 1940, recruitment for the SANMC was authorized in the

¹⁴¹"For the Defence of South Africa," The Bantu World, 27 April 1940, 4.

¹⁴²S.A.I.R.R. Papers, B43.7.3 R.J. Rheinallt Jones to Sir Edward Harding, 5 September 1940 quoted in Mirjana Roth, "If you give us rights we will fight: Black Involvement in the Second World War," in South African Historical Journal No. 15 (November 1983), 91.

¹⁴³One of their main duties was to keep a check on all people known to be pro-Nazi. Additionally, they were charged with implementing Emergency Measures against sabotage. Africans generally replaced regular policemen, who had been called up for active service. Martin and Orpen, South Africa at War, 59.

¹⁴⁴Mirjana Roth, "If you give us rights," 92.

¹⁴⁵Ibid. Smut Papers, 6/41, B. Nicholson to D.L. Smit, 10 February 1941.

Protectorate and the other High Commissioned Territories.¹⁴⁶ The new unit was under the command of Col. E.T. Stubbs. South African military planners realized that there could be training problems with recruits enlisted from outside the Union. It was suggested that officers from the Territories be incorporated into the newly formed units to help with language and training exercises. Hoping to build enthusiasm for this effort, Protectorate officials offered to establish a recruiting depot and training camp at Machaneng (a police camp in Bechuanaland), but South African officials decided against it because of the costs and inconvenience.¹⁴⁷ As it turned out, recruiting was delayed in the Protectorate due to the lack of barrack accommodations in the Union.

Resident Commissioner, C. Arden-Clarke, recognized that the success of any recruiting campaign for the SANMC would depend on first winning over the BaTswana diKgosi and influential headmen. From the beginning, there were many questions regarding organization, pay and leadership. In particular, the proposed organization of the SANMC did not permit training in "tribal units," or of service thereafter with their fellow countrymen except to a very limited extent.¹⁴⁸ Among white South African detachments, blacks were assigned as laborers and transport drivers. Later, they were integrated into artillery, smoke and ammunition units. The BaTswana diKgosi had already made it known they wanted separate "tribal" units, but the Resident Commissioner explained there were no funds for distinct HCT units. They argued there would be little or no recognition for BaTswana soldiers if they were amalgamated among the 80,000 or more recruited Africans from the Union

¹⁴⁶For history on the SANMC see Ian Gleeson, The Unknown Force: Black, Indian and Coloured Soldiers Through Two World Wars (South Africa: Ashanti Publishing, 1994) and Louis Grundlingh, "The Participation of South African Blacks in the Second World War" (D Litt et Phil thesis, 1986).

¹⁴⁷BNA S. 135/6 Box No. 135, Question of Establishment of Training Camp. Letter from Director Non-European Army Services, Ernest Stubbs, in Pretoria, dated 30 December 1940.

¹⁴⁸BNA S 135/3 Box No. 135, Native Military Corps: Terms and Conditions of Service.

which served during the war. The diKgosi were also afraid that BaTswana volunteers might receive differential treatment from South African military officers and non-commissioned officers. In order to alleviate their fears, the BaTswana diKgosi were invited to Welgedacht, South Africa to review how the training was being organized and see for themselves the accommodations, food, type of uniform, etc. that their men would be given.¹⁴⁹

The visit at Welgedacht alleviated some of the diKgosi's fears. They agreed that the Union had better facilities for training Africans than the Protectorate: the organization of the camp was good and the food excellent. However, they continued to have reservations. There was great prejudice against joining in with the Union. Many ex-soldiers remembered World War I and the discriminatory practices of Union army officials which had caused such resentment among some soldiers that they refused to accept war medals offered by the British.¹⁵⁰ In particular, they resented white objections against the arming of blacks and their forced non-combatant status. The diKgosi realized that the Union government was opposed to the formation of a Protectorate unit, but they wanted to be able to say that Bechuanaland contributed separately to the preservation of liberty, international order and tolerance against the forces of dictatorship, aggression and racial discrimination. Additionally, it was hoped by many Africans that the war would bring about a change in colonial policy regarding the incorporation of Bechuanaland into the Union of South Africa if they defended British war aims. Tshekedi Khama (Regent of the BaNgwato) summarized their position in a letter to the Resident Commissioner in February 1941:

The Chiefs of the Bechuanaland Protectorate together with their people have desired from the out-break of hostilities to take their full share in Britain's war effort and immediately tendered their services. Our desire has always been to take our

¹⁴⁹BNA S 135/7 War with Germany: Chief Tshekedi's Proposal for Formation of Native Carrier Corps.

¹⁵⁰Morton and Ramsay, Birth of Botswana, 104.

place by the side of Great Britain and her Allies in the field of war.¹⁵¹

It was also felt that if there was no intention of sending Africans out of the Union, which was the initial plan although it was quickly abandoned, they might as well stay home and contribute to local defense.¹⁵² Only seven hundred men¹⁵³ out of a total 80,000 NMC that served during the war were from the Protectorate; the BaTswana diKgosi never enthusiastically supported the South African recruitment campaign.¹⁵⁴ Withholding BaTswana manpower proved fortuitous in the long run. As the British manpower crisis deepened, new efforts were implemented by the War Office to find volunteer forces for labor duties in North Africa and the Middle East. Although colonial backwater possessions, the combined manpower strength of the Bechuanaland Protectorate and the other High Commissioned Territories was significant.

III. Events Leading to Full Mobilization in Bechuanaland

In spite of the successes against the Italian forces in Ethiopia and British Somaliland, the occupation of Eritrea and Italian Somaliland, the sinking of the *Bismarck* and the still unexplained flight of Hitler's deputy, Rudolph Hess, to Scotland, the war was not going well for Britain and its allies in 1941. The British withdrew from Greece and after a humiliating military fiasco were driven out of Crete. On 22 June the apparently invincible Hitler launched his invasion of Russia along a two-thousand mile front. By 3 September Leningrad was almost encircled. Then contradicting the mystique of British supremacy

¹⁵¹BNA S 135/7 War with Germany. Letter from Khama to Resident Commissioner, Mafeking, dated 26 February 1941.

¹⁵²BNA DCF 7/5, Formation of African Contingent Native Military Corps, Letter from Nettleton to Forsyth Thompson, 23 December 1940.

¹⁵³Another estimate puts the figure at about 500. Sir John Shuckburgh, "Civil History of the War of 1939-45 South African High Commission Territories" Official Paper. (Great Britain: Commonwealth Relations Office, 1947), 8; BNA S 136/3, Memorandum on African Pioneer Corps, No. 64.

¹⁵⁴Ian Gleeson, The Unknown Force, 111.

at sea, the aircraft-carrier *Ark Royal* was sunk off Gibraltar.¹⁵⁵ With Rommel's Afrika Korps moving across North Africa, the British manpower crisis reached new heights in mid-1941.

With the British army thus suddenly faced with an urgent need for combatants and labor units at different battle fronts in Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, officials approached South Africa for more men. However, the Union had difficulty recruiting additional European fighting forces among whites.¹⁵⁶ General Smuts when he visited the Middle East in March 1941 had warned General Wavell that white South African manpower was not unlimited. As far as the South African army was concerned, the prospect of South African troops operating in the Western Desert in conjunction with experienced Imperial forces not only raised immediate problems regarding organization but, given Union racist attitudes and policies, also raised questions relating to the employment of non-Europeans. Maximum use was already being made of the Cape Corps and Native Military Corps for military transport and other support duties at home in order to release Europeans for combat duty.¹⁵⁷ In the face of these problems, Smuts decided, against much opposition, to replace some of the white gun crews guarding the extensive coastlines of South Africa with Zulus in order to release even more Europeans for service elsewhere.¹⁵⁸ The Union was obviously doing everything it could to avoid committing Africans for military service outside its borders. It is interesting to note that when General Wavell requested 28 Native Military Corps companies for Pioneer duties, South Africa refused on

¹⁵⁵J. Crwys-Williams, A Country at War 1939-1945, 159.

¹⁵⁶Martin and Orpen, South Africa at War, 104-105. The 2nd SA Division under Maj-General I. P. de Villiers had left for North Africa at the end of May.

¹⁵⁷*Ibid.*, 74-5.

¹⁵⁸In August 1941 Zulus were recruited for 21st Field Regiment, and were first stationed in Durban. The administration convinced opponents that they were non-combatants despite the Director of Artillery Training's opinion that, "no member of a gun crew can be considered as a non-combatant...and as the training of gunners as such is, it is misleading to suggest that they [non-white gunners] are not being used as combatants. SADF Archives, UWH, Box 159.

grounds that the Native Military Corps was not a labor corps.¹⁵⁹

According to General van Ryneveld, South African blacks would be unwilling to volunteer strictly for labor duties, and if they did there would be repercussions on the farms and in the mining industry.¹⁶⁰

Frustrated with South African reticence, General Wavell requested that labor requirements be met with troops from other British possessions in Africa, specifically the High Commissioned Territories because they were better suited to the fluctuations of cooler Mediterranean climates.¹⁶¹

Thus, it was Britain's critical shortage of manpower, and the Union's reluctance to recruit strictly "labor units" for service in North Africa and the Middle East which forced the British to reconsider its policies and locate new sources of manpower. In Bechuanaland, Tshekedi Khama's proposal for a "Bechuanaland Protectorate Military Labour Corps" under British command was now seriously examined.¹⁶² Khama's proposal had sat on the back burner since February 1941. The plan outlined a cost-effective method to raise one brigade (6 companies consisting of 145 recruits each) on a trial basis.¹⁶³ Khama wanted the brigade to train in the Protectorate and then be transferred to British authorities as fighting forces, labor or transport corps, or medical auxiliaries. Khama proposed to finance the new force through a

¹⁵⁹Lt-Gen George Brink's papers. Manpower and Organisation quoted in Martin and Orpen, South Africa at War, 104. Men from the Native Military Corps were enlisted as motor and animal transport drivers, guards, stretcher-bearers, medical and hygiene personnel, and officers' batmen (personal servants). BNA S 135/3 Box No. 135, Native Military Corps: Terms and Conditions of Service.

¹⁶⁰Ibid. A special NMC unit composed of miners was sent to Syria to construct a tunnel through a mountain in 1941. See S. Horwitz, "The Non-European War Record in South Africa," Handbook of Race Relations in South Africa, 543.

¹⁶¹BNA S 136/1 War with Germany: African Auxiliary Pioneer Corps. Minutes of Resident Commissioner's Conference on 10 April 1941; also Morton and Ramsay, The Birth of Botswana, 104.

¹⁶²Tshekedi Khama's proposal was first brought to the attention of the Resident Commissioner at Mafeking on 3 March 1941. Nothing was done until General Wavell's plea several months later. BNA S 135/7 War With Germany: T.K.'s proposal for Native Carrier Corps.

¹⁶³The complete plan is in BNA S 135/7 War with Germany: Chief Tshekedi's Proposal for Formation of Native Corps. Letter to the Resident Commissioner, Mafeking, dated 26 February 1941.

graduated tax to come from two sources: tax payers and wage earners. This plan, although never implemented as designed, served as the catalyst which influenced British military officials to consider forming the African Auxiliary Pioneer Corps as an imperial unit. Once the High Commissioner received approval from the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, and agreements were reached with the Union Government, the Resident Commissioner was informed that six companies were needed immediately. The diKgosi's dream had come true, the BaTswana were, "to stand shoulder to shoulder with other Natives of Africa and India, and of European people who were fighting for Great Britain".¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁴BNA S 136/1 War with Germany: African Auxiliary Pioneer Corps. Letter from Government Secretary to Resident Commissioner, Mafeking, dated 15 June 1941.

Chapter 4: The African Auxiliary Pioneer Corps: Mobilization and Responses

Overview:

In 1941 General Auchinleck, Commander of General Headquarters (GHQ) Middle East Command, realized that in order to hold the Middle East and drive the Germans from North Africa additional manpower would be needed. The British had already committed over 800,000 men to the defense of Egypt, but there were still shortages especially in combat fields.¹ The 4th Indian Division had been in Egypt since September 1939, and was now reinforced by the 7th Indian Infantry Brigade.² Two South African divisions were employed in the Western Desert by June 1941, but they too were faced with an ever-increasing manpower crisis.³ Reinforcements were on the way from East Africa, but it would take time to get the men redeployed. The British along with the Sudan Defence Force some 9,000 strong, two East African units, two West African and one untrained South African brigade were busy liquidating the remnants of Italian East Africa.⁴ The Germans had all but engulfed Europe and were now contemplating a new invasion of the Middle East, possibly through Turkey. The British army was stretched to its limits! As in the First World War, the British War Office had come to a decision, non-white servicemen should replace non-combatants in the Middle East. The goal was to release white incumbents for combatant duties on the front-lines. The High Commission Territories of Basutoland, Bechuanaland and Swaziland were added to the growing list of "Pioneer Corps" to be

¹David Killingray, "The Idea of a British Imperial African Army," *JAH*, 20, 3 (1979), note p. 431.

²Charles C. Trench, The Indian Army and the King's Enemies 1900-1947 (GDR: Thames and Hudson, 1988), 138.

³Ian Gleeson, The Unknown Force, 134-138. South African forces reached 60,000 which was considered to be close to the limit of the voluntary manpower capabilities of the country.

⁴*Ibid.*, 142.

recruited throughout Africa.⁵ The Bechuanaland Protectorate was first given the responsibility for recruiting 5,000 men, then, unexpectedly, the number was raised to 10,000 men. Mobilization for war, which had already occurred in many other African countries, brought many changes to BaTswana populations affecting all levels of society.

Arthur Marwick, a historian who writes on the problems and consequences of organizing society for war, provides us with a few insights into the major upheavals caused by mobilization.⁶ According to Marwick, mobilizing any society for war causes major social, economic, and political upheavals which often have lasting consequences. For the belligerents, there is immediately an obvious destructive and disruptive dimension. War also brings new stresses, offers new challenges, and imposes new demands on the society. Institutions are forced to adapt; or they may even collapse. Another dimension of war, is the mobilization of a large percentage of the population who have a direct stake in the outcome of hostilities. Marwick argues that underprivileged groups within a society may benefit from participation because of the willingness of government to compromise out of necessity. However, for all participants war is an enormous emotional and psychological experience comparable with the great revolutions in history.

A complete examination of Marwick's dimensions of war is not possible here, but some of the above points are relevant to the study of

⁵Pioneer Corps were also organized in Cyprus, Palestine, Malta, Aden, Mauritius, Seychelles, West Africa and East Africa. Conscription was required in colonies that also had fighting units such as in East Africa. Only 28 Pioneer Coys (ASO Oct 1941) were recruited from East Africa because of the dwindling labor supply. Surprisingly, 59 Coys were recruited from the HCT. "Britain's Colonies in the War," Foreign Affairs 19 (1940-1), 659; BNA S 136/6, Report on Proceedings of Resident Commissioner's Conference, Pretoria, 15-16 October 1941.

⁶Arthur Marwick, "Problems and Consequences of Organizing Society for Total War," Mobilization for Total War (Canada: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1981). See also Marjorie M. Farrar, "World War II as Total War," in War: A Historical, Political, and Social Study, L.L. Farrar, Jr., ed. (ABC-CLIO, Inc., 1978), 171-179.

mobilization in Bechuanaland during the Second World War. Unlike other African colonies, the creation of a military unit in Bechuanaland (and the other HCT) was a highly charged political issue involving British colonial administrators and the diKgosi because of South Africa's "historical stance" against arming Africans from the region in "white man's wars". Additionally, in the First World War, blacks from the Territories had been under Union command in order to maintain certain segregatory devices of "social control".⁷ The British move to create a new and separate African Auxiliary Pioneer Corps was thus politically a very controversial proposition. Plans and policies regarding the Corps were negotiated between British and South African leaders, with the cooperation of the eight major BaTswana diKgosi, in order to avoid a strong political backlash in South Africa and gain acceptance in the Protectorate for a noncombatant corps. As Marwick suggests, the exigencies of war facilitated cooperation and compromise between the British and the BaTswana. In less than six months after the War Office requested auxiliary troops, fifteen AAPC companies were organized and on their way to the Middle East. Although the overall impact of mobilization in Bechuanaland is hotly debated by historians, war brought many political, economic and social changes which affected life at the personal level for many Batswana men and their families.

Those who joined the AAPC did so for various reasons: loyalty to the British crown, political reasons such as preventing the Protectorate from being incorporated into the Union, the pressure placed on them by the diKgosi or other peers, the desire for education and new experiences. The reasons why the BaTswana joined the AAPC cannot be categorized in watertight compartments. Various considerations influenced their decision; more than one reason or a combination of reasons could obviously have influenced an individual's decision.

⁷Albert Grundlingh, Fighting Their Own War, 43.

I. Colonial Mobilization and the Role of Propaganda

The sudden change in British labor requirements in the Spring of 1941 was conveyed to southern Africa when an urgent request from the Commander of the Allied Forces in the Middle East reached the Chief Commander of the British Military Mission (MILMIS) stationed in Pretoria on 30 March 1941. The commander's telegram stated that by June a manpower deficiency of approximately 4,000 men was anticipated within the Allied Forces in the Middle East. Because of the harsh, colder climates of some of the assignments especially in Cyrenaica and the Balkans, it was determined that "tropical" Africans were not suitable for the work. Therefore, the commander's telegram declared, "the only alternative was to recruit in areas south of the latitude 22 degrees".⁸

The High Commissioner informed the military authorities in the Middle East that, providing conditions of service and pay were satisfactory, they might be able to raise 10,000 men in Basutoland, 3,000 in Bechuanaland, and 500 in Swaziland.⁹ These men would comprise the African Auxiliary Pioneer Corps (AAPC), and terms and conditions of military service were to be identical to the SANMC in order to avoid competition between the services. The Territories had to provide European officers for key leadership positions, and the Union would facilitate that process by releasing Territory officials serving in the UDF. This was a crucial point because the Resident Commissioners from the HCT were adamant that South African officers were not to command their troops. The High Commissioner stressed that the AAPC would have access to South African resources, especially in regards to military

⁸BNA S 136/1, Record of Conference in Resident Commissioners Office, 10 April 1941. Initially this meant that the BaTawana in the northern Protectorate were not allowed to enlist. Kgosi Moremi III protested against this policy and during the second recruitment campaign in July 1942, the BaTawana were asked to form a company of about 350 men. D. Kiyaga-Mulindwa, "The Bechuanaland Protectorate and the Second World War," 37.

⁹Ibid., 104. The High Commissioner originally presented conservative estimates of available manpower. Figures were changed as requirements filtered down from the Middle East.

clothing and equipment. Additionally, special recognition and privileges would be afforded the AAPC. Unlike the SANMC, 25% of AAPC units could be armed for self-defense once they reached the Middle East, according to agreements reached with General Smuts.¹⁰ Since any unit operating in the desert was open to sudden attack by a mobile column, in retrospect it is hard to imagine how unarmed men could be expected to serve at all.¹¹

On 15 June 1941, the Resident Commissioner of Bechuanaland¹² and the diKgosi were informed that authorization to mobilize had been granted by British authorities. Out of the negotiations conducted between South Africa and Great Britain over the employment of the AAPC during the preceding months, new conditions of service emerged. The British War Office, concerned over conflicts of interest with Union officials, determined that all AAPC recruits were bound by the British Army Act (not Union army regulations), that an Oath of Allegiance to the Crown was mandatory, and military service could be anywhere in the world.¹³ These new conditions of service guaranteed that British army officials would maintain command and control over the men assigned to AAPC units. It effectively separated the AAPC from any official association with the SANMC. The diKgosi were supportive of these initiatives and relieved when they learned that each of the major merafe would be authorized to recruit its own separate company within the AAPC.

¹⁰HCT troops were to be armed with a rifle, or alternatively, some would be armed with machine guns. They were NOT issued arms in the Territories. BNA DCG 3/2 Box No. 3, African Auxiliary Pioneer Corps: Enlistment of Africans.

¹¹Despite army policies against arming Africans, many soldiers possessed weapons, including South African blacks. Captured guns were given to Africans for training and personal use. Jack Kros, With the South Africans from Taranto to the Alps (Rivonia, South Africa: Ashanti Publishing (Pty) Ltd., 1992), 153-4; photo in James Ambrose Brown, Retreat to Victory: A Springbok's Diary in North Africa (Johannesburg: Ashanti Publishing, 1991), 53.

¹²The Resident Commissioners in Bechuanaland during the war period were Lt Col C.N. Arden-Clarke (from outbreak to August 1942) and Mr. A.D. Forsyth Thompson (August 1942 to end of hostilities).

¹³BNA S 136/1, Minutes of conference held by the Resident Commissioner at Gaberones, 20 June 1941.

However, government officials and the diKgosi somewhat surprised that recruitment was to commence without delay.

As an emergency recruiting measure, the Resident Commissioner requested that the Native Recruiting Corporation (NRC) as well as independent recruiting agencies stop all recruiting for the mines in the Protectorate.¹⁴ It was estimated that over 12,000 men were working in the mines and on farms in South Africa in 1939. It was hoped that the NRC would return the men from the mines as they completed their contracts.¹⁵ The Witwatersand Native Labour Association (WNLA) was, however, allowed to recruit as usual in the tropical areas. In order to make travel to South Africa more difficult, the police were ordered to suspend all visiting passes to the Union; and no passes were issued except to those ineligible for military service. The diKgosi were asked to arrange kgotla meetings attended by the Resident Commissioner to explain the urgent manpower needs of the British Government.

Events moved quickly after the initial order for military mobilization was received in the Protectorate. The British colonial administrators and subsequently the diKgosi, received new instructions and requirements on a continuous basis. In July, the Resident Commissioner informed BaTswana leaders that official AAPC requirements for Bechuanaland were higher than initially anticipated by the High Commissioner. The starting quota was five thousand men or fifteen companies (Coys). The quotas were as follows: the BaNgwato were required to produce seven companies of 365 men each; the BaKwena and BaNgwaketse each had to produce three; the BaTlokwa and BaTawana each one; and the BaKgatla, BaMalete, BaRolong and Francistown were to produce one together.¹⁶ These figures reflected population strengths within the Protectorate, and the political influence of certain groups.

¹⁴BNA DCG 3/2 Box No 3, Letter from Forsyth Thompson to Theron's Native Labour Organisation.

¹⁵Official Yearbook of South Africa (1941), 1197.

¹⁶BNA S 136/1, War with Germany, AAPC: Recruiting and Training.

The BaNgwato were the largest and the most influential ethnic group within the colonial structure in 1941.¹⁷

Mobilizing military forces proved quite a challenge for the British administration and the diKgosi in Bechuanaland. Before mobilization could begin, there were many problems to be worked out regarding command structure and leadership; the nature of military service, whether the men would be armed or unarmed; the methods of recruiting, whether to seek volunteers or implement conscription; how to inform and motivate the population to come forward; and who was eligible to serve. Within the Protectorate there were many impediments to raising a military force: lack of organization, resistance on the part of some diKgosi, poor education and training levels, manpower shortages, drought, health problems, and apathy, to name a few. For colonial officials who were burdened with the task of supplying recruits, it became increasingly apparent that new and innovative strategies would be required to meet army quotas. The recruiting drive caused tension between the government officials and the diKgosi, and also between the diKgosi and their people.

With 5,000 men to recruit for military service, it was recognized by inexperienced colonial officials (recruiting for the mines had been done by labor professionals) that an efficient administrative system was needed in the Protectorate. The District Commissioners, under the direction of the Resident Commissioner, proceeded to organize the effort. District "depots" were established in order to gather and prepare the men for transfer to Camp Lobatsi. Transportation officials were contacted to schedule regular train stops in the major centers. Trucks were hired to get men from the rural areas to the depots and

¹⁷According to military historian Cynthia Enloe, "few military organizations are accurate mirrors of their respective societies, and "merit" criteria were important in selecting ethnic groups for military service." Police, Military and Ethnicity: Foundations of State Power (New Brunswick (USA): Transaction Books, 1980), 14.

train stations. Medical officers were appointed to administer physical examinations of all recruits. Defense committees were organized and assigned with recruiting suitable Europeans and Africans (generally police) to serve as non-commissioned officers (NCOs). Protectorate officials were already identifying whites (generally men within the colonial network) as officers.¹⁸ Protectorate officers serving in the Union Defense Force (UDF) were requisitioned because their language skills were of military importance in the Pioneer Corps.¹⁹ Africans with special skills such as cooks, clerks, storemen, and medical orderlies were asked to come forward first to fulfill job openings at the depots. A few BaTswana were sent to Gaberones to begin training as military instructors. Upon completion of instructor training, they often returned to the villages to drill the awaiting regiments. Thus, the basic foundations of a military operation were in place and operating by the end of the month. The next hurdle was to stimulate interest among the BaTswana to serve the empire and volunteer for military service.

From the first rumbles of war in Europe, Great Britain was concerned about its image as a colonial power. It was decided that a new theme was needed to bring the empire together. During the war, the new image of empire was partnership; trusteeship was abandoned because it was thought to be not sufficiently dynamic.²⁰ It was quickly recognized by the Colonial Office in London that mobilization for total war would require a coordinated propaganda campaign to combat dissension and stimulate recruiting for the many volunteer military units throughout the empire. The task of organizing the propaganda campaign

¹⁸BNA S 136/1, No 1757/25 DCM, Letter from Resident Commissioner, Mafeking to Heads of Departments and District Commissioners, dated 13 June, 1941. Administrative personnel selected were: J.D.A. Germond, C.C. McLaren, P.C. Grant, R.A.R. Bent, and G.J.L. Atkinson. Police: Capt J. Masterman.

¹⁹S 136/1, Conference minutes, mafeking, 10 April 1941. Sixteen men were identified with a knowledge of SeTswana who were serving with the Sixth Field Artillery Regiment (UDF).

²⁰Rosaleen Smyth, "Britain's African Colonies and British Propaganda during the Second World War," JICH, XIV(1985), 69.

was given to the newly established British Ministry of Information (MOI). The MOI provided materials including posters, maps, pamphlets, newspaper articles and films to the information officers appointed by the Colonial Office in each colony. The Colonial Office also put on its staff a public relations officer.

The propaganda campaign devised by these two rival organizations²¹ focused on three interrelated elements aimed at convincing the colonial subject: that Britain was fighting evil (Nazism); that the moral and material development to which the empire looked forward after the war depended on victory; and that by the united efforts of "right-thinking persons" this victory could be assured.²² As the war progressed, it was decided that the "evil things" propaganda might backfire and thus should be avoided. A Colonial Office memorandum expressed the fear that

When the excuse for hating the Germans has been removed the sentiment may be transferred to what is uppermost in the minds of all Africans as they attain political and social consciousness, namely the colour question...having been encouraged to hate one branch of the white race, they may extend that feeling to others.²³

It was determined that propaganda should focus on the positive aspects of "togetherness" and "future colonial objectives." This was the theme of the MOI pamphlet, Sixty Million Of Us which stressed interdependence to achieve the larger objectives of protecting the empire against the political ideology of Nazism and the physical threats of German aggression.²⁴ Britain's gratitude for colonial support in the war effort was also a favorite Colonial Office theme. The Crown, visible symbol of the empire, was the cornerstone of loyalty propaganda; "it is of the utmost importance that His Majesty should be kept on the highest

²¹The Colonial Office and the MOI relations were anything but harmonious during the war. For details see Temple Willcox, "Projection or Publicity? Rival Concepts in the Pre-War Planning of the British Ministry of Information," Journal of Contemporary History, 18,1 (1983), 99-100.

²²R. Smyth, "Britain's African Colonies," 74.

²³Memorandum by the Colonial Office on propaganda for Africans sent to colonial governments in Africa, 15 September 1941, CO 875/9/6281/75A.

²⁴R. Smyth, "Britain's African Colonies," 75.

pedestal and in no circumstances should pride of place be shared with other personages", said one propaganda directive.²⁵ Pictures of the King, Queen and Princess Elizabeth in full regalia were placed in prominent places. Messages of gratitude from the King were sent to the colonies on Empire Day:

It is a wonderful thing for me to reflect that the promises of loyalty and support which so many of you sent to me in the darkest days of our history have been redeemed many times over. My colonial troops side by side with their comrades from all parts of the Empire, have fought and are fighting with their traditional bravery. To all I send this expression of my appreciation of their devoted work, and of the hope that, with God's help, we shall come through peril and suffering.²⁶

Loyalty to the British crown remained a prominent feature in Bechuanaland throughout the war. It was consistent with pre-war colonial ideology and colonial propagandists hoped it would appeal to BaTswana "communalism" and strong "sense of justice". In some cases it worked. Veteran Mositalgomo Ephraim Molatlhwe remembers clearly why he fought, "I fought for the protection of the Queen", he said.²⁷ In the Bantu World (Johannesburg), frequent articles and pictures on the progress of the war appeared.²⁸ African columnists stressed the importance of blacks in the struggle for freedom in editorials. "Today the freedom-loving peoples of the world stand united against Nazi tyranny", was a phrase which underscored a photo of servicemen from

²⁵Usill, survey, "Plan of Propaganda to the Colonies", 13 May 1942, INF 1/555 as quoted by R. Smyth, "African Colonies and Wartime Propaganda," 76.

²⁶"The King Thanks Colonial Peoples for Loyalty," The Bantu World, 27 May 1944, front page.

²⁷Mositalgomo Ephraim Molatlhwe, Gabane, interview by Michael Taylor, for National Museum in Gaborone, transcript, February 1994.

²⁸The Bantu World was founded in April 1932 as the first paper designed to attract white businessmen to reach the growing African market. It was first edited by Richard Selope Thema. For a history of the paper see, T.J. Couzens, "A short history of The World (and other black South African newspapers)", African Studies Institute (University of Witwatersrand) seminar paper, 1976; L. and D. Switzer, The Black Press in South Africa and Lesotho (Boston, 1979).

around the globe.²⁹ These appeals were most likely to influence educated Africans in the Protectorate.³⁰ They were products of mission schools such as Tiger Kloof and shared a common ideological outlook. Inculcated with British values regarding patriotism and loyalty, young students such as Sello Bogatsu and Abang Nkwe saw the war as a way to further their education and ambitions within the colonial system.³¹

Despite Colonial Office reservations, crude anti-German propaganda continued to be used throughout Africa. Fear was a strong motivator for those who had some knowledge of German imperial goals in World War One. The BaTswana knew of the German campaigns against the Herero in South West Africa, their close neighbors to the west. Germany's racist policies against Africans also received extensive coverage in black newspapers. One example, is the campaign against Nazism in The Bantu World. Articles focused on past German atrocities, child conscription in Germany and the evils of Nazism.³² "The Menace of Hitler's 'New World Order'" predicted the demise of all African freedoms and the eventual enslavement of the black man.³³ Images of Africans being thrown back to

²⁹The Bantu World (4 April 1942), Children's Supplement. Black newspaper men such as Sol T. Plaatje were vocal supporters of educational and community work. They could also be strong agitators for change. Plaatje was a member of the delegation which travelled to London to oppose the Native Land Act between 1914-17. During WWI, the South African Native National Congress agreed to suspend its grievances against whites and support the war. Newspapers in 1942 followed this same tradition.

³⁰Special appeals had been made by the army authorities for the enlistment of teachers and more highly educated BaTswana in order that they might be trained as non-commissioned officers. DO 35 1184 Y1062/3, Letter from High Commissioner to Brigadier Salisbury Jones, 30 January, 1943.

³¹Both enlisted right out of Khale School with the consent of their parents. I interviewed both of these men in 1994 and they confirm that they were motivated by a chance to acquire a broader educative experience. They were "anxious to see the world". DCG 3/7 Box No. 3, Letter from DC Gaberones to Reverend Father Vollmer, Khale School, dated 8 September 1942.

³²"Child Conscription in Nazi Germany," Bantu World, (8 February 1941), 5. This newspaper was probably read most often by BaTswana men working in the mines of South Africa. News reached the African population in Bechuanaland through informal channels. The Mafeking Mail published in the colonial administrative center also published news on the war, but was geared towards whites.

³³The Bantu World, (16 January 1941), 4.

the dark ages with no access to education, religion, freedom of thought and action filled the pages. Veterans today emphasize that Hitler was evil because he claimed the whole world. "Hitler said all the land was his," recalls Ramonaka Semele, "He had to be killed".³⁴ Another veteran explained that the war was worthwhile because, "Botswana was going to be attacked by the Germans".³⁵

The critical need for African support led the Bechuanaland administration to employ a variety of recruiting tactics. As most Africans in the Protectorate were illiterate, a new emphasis on electronic media emerged. Mobile cinema vans toured the Protectorate stopping at Lobatsi, Gaborones, Mahalapye, Palapye, Francistown and Mafeking among other places.³⁶ Posters were put out and halls reserved to show recruiting films. Broadcasts from the Mafeking Radio Station covered war news and home-front efforts on a weekly basis.³⁷ Africans listened in on community sets at district headquarters, at mission stations, and at listening points in towns and on farms. Recruiting tours involving the Resident Commissioner were organized. Speeches made by diKgosi, respected villagers and, sometimes, army personnel served as a successful means of rallying contributions, including military recruits, for the war. However, as the war dragged on and more recruits were needed, apathy began to set in. The men were not so easily swayed by emotive propaganda material. It was soon discovered that the young men could be persuaded more through physical displays and personal testimony.

In September 1941, 1974 Company (BaTlokwa) which had just finished training at Lobatsi, was brought to Gaberones to help with recruiting.

³⁴Ramonaka Semele, E.C. 2016, interview by author, Odi, 19 July 1994.

³⁵Matutu Kolobe, E.C. 3019, interview by author, Tlokwen, 19 July 1994.

³⁶BNA S 120/9, Recruitment Operations in Bechuanaland Protectorate, 1941.

³⁷BNB 447 DC 31128/1 "Official Civil History of the War," 22. The last broadcast was on 21 March 1946.

The District Commissioner describes the day, "the band played, there was a ceremonial parade and then the men marched to Gaberones for entrainment".³⁸ The First BaNgwato Company displayed their drill skills to a large gathering in Serowe during the same month. Often the local churches were involved; hymns were sung by children and prayers were led by local religious leaders.³⁹ The African band was considered a crucial element in every recruiting tour and often was ordered to stay in a reserve to play at upcoming kgotlas.

In August 1942, the band worked the BaNgwato Reserve for a fortnight, then on to the BaNgwaketsi Reserve for a week, to the BaKwena Reserve for a week and, finally, on to the BaKgatla and Gaberones districts.⁴⁰ Kgosi Tshekedi felt that the band was of great assistance in recruitment especially amongst the young men. In Tati district, the District Commissioner thought the band was especially important:

Mangan urges that the band and epidiascope⁴¹ should be brought to Francistown for recruiting purposes. I think in both cases the band would be of considerable assistance especially in the Tati Native Reserve where we have to rely for recruits more on propaganda than upon the ability of their Chiefs to exert pressure on them.⁴²

During the second recruiting campaign in 1942, it was decided to bring selected African Regimental Sergeant Majors back from the Middle East to assist in recruiting. These men held their own recruiting meetings in important merafe centers and also travelled extensively in rural areas.⁴³ Their major task was to combat the widespread apathy towards the war. They smartly showed off their uniforms, told stories about the brave actions of the men in the Middle East, and emphasized

³⁸BNA DCG 3/2, AAPC: Enlistment of Africans, Note in File, n.d.

³⁹BNA S 136/4, Program of Visit of First Bamangwato Company of the African Auxiliary Pioneer Corps, 2-3 September 1941.

⁴⁰BNA S 137/1/2, Memorandum on Recruiting for the AAPC, 21 July 1942.

⁴¹An epidiascope was a projector for images of opaque objects or for images or transparencies.

⁴²BNA S 137/1/2, Letter from Nettelton to Mr. Forsyth Thompson, 4 August 1942.

⁴³Ibid.

the virtues of duty, honor, and country.

Newspapers and newsheets also served an important role in the mobilization campaign by publishing materials supplied by the Information Department. In September 1939, the Director of Education at Mafeking was assigned the job of printing a newsletter titled Lebone in SeTswana.⁴⁴ Lebone printed war news, maps, photographs, and articles on first aid, signalling and physical drill. It was reported to have been widely read throughout the Protectorate by the literate who passed on news to their friends. The newsletter was also sent to teachers in the Protectorate who were then asked to read them to the headmen at the kgotlas.⁴⁵ News also reached the Protectorate directly from the theater of war. Company commanders wrote short pieces on country conditions, training, promotions, leisure activities and general items of interest.⁴⁶

These newsletters were forwarded to the Director of Education at Mafeking to be included in other publications. Reporters attached to international press services located at GHQ Middle East Forces and later Central Mediterranean Forces also covered AAPC activities. Their short stories focused on human-interest type news such as "Bechuana Pioneers Down on the Farm: Growing Fodder for Horses" or "Bechuana Sergeant's Flight in Storm: Mountains Covered with Snow".⁴⁷

The most widely read paper among the troops was the AAPC News Supplement to the newspaper Indlhovu which first appeared in 1943.⁴⁸ The Resident Commissioner took a direct interest in the success of this paper. One of the major complaints of servicemen was that they were not receiving news from home. The News Supplement was initiated to provide a forum for local authorities to express their gratitude to the soldiers

⁴⁴Mafeking Mail, 20 September 1939, 5.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶BNA DCS 30/1, Newsletters from the Middle East, 1941-42.

⁴⁷BNA S 133/2/2, Newsletters from AAPC Companys in Middle East, 1945.

⁴⁸BNA DCS 30/1, Letter from D.C. Ellenberger, Lobatsi to W. MacKenzie, 30 May 1943.

and provide much-awaited news. In order to ensure that every merafe was given an opportunity to submit articles, African correspondents were appointed by the diKgosi in each district to gather local news. Articles submitted in Bechuanaland were combined with news from Basutoland and Swaziland. Indlhovu circulated to Pioneer Corps units throughout the Middle East every two weeks. The newspaper was very popular at home as well as with those on active service overseas. In 1944, units in Sicily and Italy also received Indlhovu regularly. News regarding the religious welfare of the men was compiled by LMS chaplain, Reverend A. Sandilands. Circulars were sent to Tiger Kloof and were read by the students and faculty. All of these sources provided information on the war which facilitated mobilization within the Protectorate and influenced morale at home.

However, although these propaganda initiatives undoubtedly helped to increase awareness of the war and convinced many men to join the AAPC, other initiatives proved necessary to fully mobilize the Protectorate.⁴⁹ All members of the colonial power structure, especially the diKgosi but, almost equally important, district commissioners, military officers, clergy and mining officials, were enlisted to rally the population through a variety of methods, including coercion.

II. Mobilization: Political, Economic and Social Factors

Many BaTswana men resisted military service. For the average young man, there were few incentives. The war was considered a foreign event which did not directly touch or threaten their lives. There was plenty of work for men willing to go to the mines in South Africa. The conditions of military service were not impressive. The wages paid to soldiers was not sufficient to induce them to proceed to an unknown and

⁴⁹Propaganda was used heavily in other British colonies with varying degrees of success. The Gold Coast launched the most extensive propaganda campaign in West Africa and still was forced to implement conscription in all regions of the territory. Wendell P. Holbrook, "British Propaganda and the Mobilization of the Gold Coast War Effort, 1939-1945," JAH, 26 (1985), 358-9.

strange country for the purpose of laboring under risky war-time circumstances. Once the men attested, they would be gone for the duration of the war. BaTswana families had already suffered due to the ever increasing demands for migrant labor. Women needed men to support the family and help with other economic activities. The administration was also demanding increased economic self-sufficiency within the Protectorate during the war. Agricultural production and cattle herding were important to the economic success of war mobilization. Who was going to plow the fields and tend the cattle? Recruitment was further hampered by the fact that the subordinate position of blacks in Bechuana society was reproduced in the wartime role allocated to them by the government's defense policy. Some blacks argued that since the authorities refused to grant them combatant status and the equality with whites that implied, they were not prepared to participate in a lesser capacity as laborers. Some, such as the BaTlokwa, had bravely fought in the last war. Why should they risk their lives, but not be trusted to fight in this world conflict?

As might be expected, some of the merafe were not ready for mobilization on such a grand scale. They possessed few resources and had had little time to prepare their people. Had not the administration just a short time ago said that their help was unwanted in this new "white man's war"? At a kgotla held in Gaborones in June 1941, the smaller merafe, voiced their concerns about the availability of men.⁵⁰ Initially, the BaKgatlwa were disgruntled over the non-combatant status of the AAPC and refused to send in recruits.⁵¹ Even after it was agreed

⁵⁰This despite the fact that the BaTlokwa and BaMalete were only required to recruit a half company (150 men). BNA DCG 3/2, AAPC Enlistment of Africans.

⁵¹The BaKgatlwa met on 16 Sept. 1939 and clearly discussed the issue of participation in the war. They recalled their "alliance and assistance to the British in the two Boer wars of 1899 and 1902 and intended to do the same". DiKgosi Pilane sent a message of support to the RC on 21 Sept. 1939. BNA S 134/1.

that they would participate, it was difficult to find recruits.⁵² Kgosi Mmusi Pilane (BaKgatlana) did not know if he could raise even half a company because many of the young men were on contract with the mines. Of the age groups 20-45, nearly 31% of the BaKgatlana men were in the Union or elsewhere working.⁵³ Regent Ketshwerebothata Mokgosi of Ramotswa (BaMalete) explained that mine work was preferred by many young men due to the uncertainties of military service:

When we go back to our homes and tell them what has happened here they will run off, what are we to do with these people? At the beginning I picked out 4 regiments and all of these men have now gone to the Union. Please realize this is not the fault of the Chiefs. We wish to give every assistance but we cannot hold our people.⁵⁴

The Resident Commissioner explained that the smaller merafe were not expected to suffer unduly, but the requirements were based on manpower figures and the ability of each merafe to contribute.⁵⁵ If the men choose to run away, they were cowards:

I cannot put brave hearts into cowards but I have asked the N.R.C. to stop all recruiting in the B.P. and also asked Mafeking, Rustenburg, Lichtenburg and Zeerust to turn back any B.P. boys... We do not want the runaways, we want the men with good hearts.⁵⁶

It was obvious that the administration thought the runaways were dodging their "duty" towards King and Country. In addition to the strain placed upon the smaller merafe from the administration, the BaTlokwa, BaMalete and Kgafela BaKgatlana were also under extreme peer pressure to meet their quotas. Kgosi Khama and Kgosi Bathoen publicly embarrassed them by offering to send more people if their numbers remained low:

⁵²BNA DCG 3/2, Letter from Ellenberger to Forsyth Thompson, 10 July 1941.

⁵³BNA S 93/6, Manpower Figures for the BaTlokwa Reserve Based on Taxpayers 1936 and 1942.

⁵⁴BNA S 136/1, War with Germany, AAPC: Question of Recruiting and Training, Minutes of Resident Commissioner's Conference, 20 June 1941. Ketshwerebothata faced many problems as regent for the BaMalete were not a unified merafe. BNA DCG 3/4, Annual Report Gaborone, 1941.

⁵⁵Part of the problem can be seen in comparing BaMalete recruiting figures for 1941: 262 BaMalete were recruited for the Witswatersrand Mines; 101 BaMalete were recruited for the AAPC. BNA DCG 3/4, Annual Report Gaborone, 1941.

⁵⁶Ibid.

Kgosi Tshekedi: I see that some of the Chiefs have some doubt about their followers--If there is any difficulty I can send more. My people are eager to go.

Kgosi Bathoen: I have no doubt that my people will listen to the Government's message. My people will do as they are required.⁵⁷

When recruiting quotas were not met, District Commissioner Ellenberger wrote Forsyth Thompson that Matlala Gaborone (BaTlokwa) and Ketshwrebothata were "weak" and ineffectual diKgosi who had lost authority in their merafe.⁵⁸ The administration manipulated "tribal" rivalries to rouse enthusiasm and a spirit of competition as to which merafe could proclaim the most recruits. They were often compared to the energetic, but autocratic leader, Tshekedi Khama who coerced others to meet demands despite the government policy of volunteerism.

Tshekedi, the prime mover and the strongest supporter of the recruitment scheme, was given a quota of seven companies, and from the start was quite worried about his ability to fill his quota.⁵⁹ Even before official authorization to mobilize had been passed to the diKgosi, Tshekedi wrote for permission to hold meetings throughout the country in order to "dispel rumors and prepare the people for what is coming."⁶⁰ According to District Commissioner Nettelton, Tshekedi was particularly adamant about suspending recruiting for the mines:

Tshekedi is singularly obstinate on this point (resumption of NRC and WNLA recruiting) mainly because he does not wish to fail in producing four more companies. No recruiting for the mines should take place before the necessary quota of Army recruits has been collected at Serowe and Malapye. He anticipates this will be at the end of September and it will then be possible to begin restricted recruiting.⁶¹

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸BNA DCG 3/2 Box No. 3, AAPC: Enlistment of Africans. Letter from Ellenberger to Forsyth Thompson, dated 10 September 1941; also BNA DCG 3/4, Annual Report Gaborone, 1941.

⁵⁹D. Kiyaga-Mulindwa, "The Bechuanaland Protectorate and the Second World War," JICH XII, (May 1984), 38.

⁶⁰S 136/1, District Commissioner, Serowe, to Resident Commissioner, Mafeking, 30 April 1941. Tshekedi, despite his personal power, could not decide or commit his people without long debate and persuasion in kgotla.

⁶¹BNA S 136/4, Transportation and Recruiting Problems, Nettelton to Government Secretary, Mafeking, September 1941.

However, despite these restrictions, recruitment among the BaNgwato went slower than anticipated. "It is because of the lack of education that many of our people still fail to understand how closely and vitally this war affects us. It is due to this ignorance that the war effort of our people is not as great as it might be and this is causing some of us grief and anxiety," said Tshekedi.⁶² The kgosi appealed to his people to support the war effort at a special letsholo--the customary formal declaration of war and call to arms. The war experience would provide an education and widen their visions of the world, he said. Additionally, the BaNgwato would gain a better understanding of the Protectorate's "smallness in the great family of nations of the British Empire, and hence appreciate to a far greater degree than at present the significance of Britain's protection of their rights."⁶³ He promised that the men's families would be well cared for if they went to war, and that on coming back they would be envied by those who remained behind.⁶⁴

One factor which effectively limited full mobilization in Bechuanaland was the official demand for only volunteers. Unlike the French colonies in West Africa, the British refused to consider conscription as a method of filling military quotas during the war.⁶⁵ In Bechuanaland, the diKgosi argued, "the principal of voluntary service is unknown."⁶⁶ Historically when regiments were called out for war, they were led by members of the royal family, and disobedience was not

⁶²BNA S 198/5, High Commissioner Visits to B.P., Speech made by T.K. in August 1941.

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Michael Crowder handwritten interview notes. Special Collections. London: Institute of Commonwealth Studies.

⁶⁵Lord Harlech made the comment in October 1941 that conscription might have to be considered if the quotas could not be met. British archival evidence shows that his proposal for conscription would not have been approved by Whitehall. BNA S 136/6, Report on the Proceedings of Resident Commissioners Conference, Pretoria, 15-16 October 1941.

⁶⁶BNA S 136/1, Letter from District Commissioner, Molepolole, to the Government Secretary, Mafeking, dated 28 May 1941. Kgosi Kgari had approached the D.C. with the problem of voluntary service.

tolerated.⁶⁷ Headmen reminded the administration of the right of the diKgosi to call out "tribal labor" under Proclamation No. 74 in 1934.⁶⁸ Regiments or mephato had been called out by the diKgosi for considerable public works projects throughout the Protectorate without complaints from the administration. During these times of trouble, the diKgosi argued, they should be able to exercise their prerogatives. Kgosi Kgari Sechele II explained his position in a letter to the District Commissioner, Molepolole:

I have the honour to inform you that I have a very big complaint... the BaKwena Tribe does not realize the importance of this war... I have an implicit confidence that we will be blamed if we do not call where the Government needs us, and what a disgrace if we here cannot go and release the soldiers from labour.

I have profound belief that we here will fail to get people together waiting for the call. The village is quite desolate. [I] request my government that arrangements should be made with N.R.C. ...to tell them that their Chief wants them...

[Our] Tribe have lost its customs and laws and I am now fighting against heavy odds to make the BaKwena cope together and bring them also to their fathers' customs and laws. If the boys could be made to return home everybody will realize the Mines are not hiding places and will have no chance of slighting their Chief's orders. They will obey and do what they are told.⁶⁹

Voluntary recruitment was considered a serious problem as early as June 1941. District Commissioner Ellenberger noted that he was having trouble getting enough recruits due to the poor response of the BaMalete. The BaMalete Kgosi originally called up four regiments (448 men) and only 18 recruits had attested on 4 August 1941. Kgosi Matlala (BaTlokwa) originally called up four regiments (283 men) from which it was estimated 74 men would be available for service with the Pioneer Corps.⁷⁰ It became obvious to the administrators and diKgosi that the

⁶⁷Mrs. Motswere Pilane, "Interview Notes on Bakgatla History: R.F. Morton, 1982," Compiled and edited by R.F. Morton, Department of History University of Botswana, (Feb. 1982): 81.

⁶⁸BNA DCS 24/21, Annual Report, 1939, District Commissioner, Serowe. In all three HCT the High Commissioner's legislative enactments took the form of numbered "Proclamations".

⁶⁹BNA S 136/1, Letter from Kgari Sechele II to District Commissioner, Molepolole, dated 27 May 1941.

⁷⁰BNA DCG 3/2 Box No. 3, African Auxiliary Pioneer Corps: Enlistment of Africans, Report by D.C. Ellenberger August 1941.

men were not volunteering in sufficient numbers. Thus, according to the diKgosi, the only way they could raise the required number of men was to call out the age-group regiments (mephato) and force the men to attest.

In reality, this was already being done in many areas with disappointing results. District Commissioner Ellenberger reported that Kgosi Matlala "ordered every man to come for a medical examination but only 23 men were present when he arrived to supervise the exams."⁷¹ Kgosi Bathoen, who was away from his capital, had left instructions that 158 men should present themselves for attestation on 21 August, but only five men attended the medical examination. On the Kgosi's return and, it would appear, after "a lot of flogging", some 132 men "volunteered".⁷² In Tati district, it was reported that "people with criminal records were outrightly forced, even those with civil cases like adultery".⁷³ Interviews conducted in Ngamiland also describe forced recruitment under the direction of Kgosi Moremi:

When the war began, I went to sign up. Policemen were at the Shorobe kgotla and Moremi was there with a white doctor. Ramakoba [his owner, a headman] came and took him back. At that time people were running away and when the police came they stood on their heads and pretended to be trees. Escapees were forced to join. He remembers one going before Moremi who was trembling a lot.⁷⁴

Thus, the same story emerges over and over when talking to the veterans. Many men ran away, but were chased down and forced to join the AAPC by merafe officials. Despite such compulsion, it would be wrong to assume that Africans were completely at the mercy of the diKgosi or recruiters, they displayed considerable resourcefulness to avoid being impressed

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²BNA S 136/2, District Commissioner, Kanye to Government Secretary, Mafeking, 27 August 1941.

⁷³Tshipo Matilamba (Tagwa Ward), "The Life and Career of SHE Bakwali Kgosi Habangana IV of Mapoka Village 1930-1987: Interview by Teedzani Davies Thapelo, 01 July 1989," in University of Botswana Research Essay, May 1990.

⁷⁴Gabaikanye Makumbi, Slave background, interview by Barry Morton, 24 January 1994, Shorobe. Barry Morton (Ph.D., Indiana University, 1996) did extensive interviews in Ngamiland on many topics between 1993-94. I am indebted to him for providing transcripts of those interviews dealing with WWII.

into military service. Nevertheless, it is clear that questionable methods abounded and that some BaTswana did not, in the true sense of the word, "volunteer" for the AAPC.

Elsewhere when colonialists used chiefs as agents of recruitment for labor or war, the line between voluntary and compulsory service was often very thin.⁷⁵ Obviously, the Bechuanaland diKgosi were under great pressure from the colonial administration to fill army quotas. The empire needed men and the Protectorate was expected to fulfill its obligations with fervency.⁷⁶ For the most part, the diKgosi were willing to collaborate on the project, but wanted autonomy in making it work within merafe historical experiences. The colonial "partnership" was beginning to show signs of stress. In June 1942, administrative concerns about compulsion surfaced:

I am directed by the Resident Commissioner to inform you that questions have arisen regarding the methods that may legitimately be adapted in the HCT to obtain recruits for the AAPC. Until these are resolved, it is inadvisable that Administrative Officers, Chiefs or others should take any action which savours of compulsion or involves the issue of orders which, if disobeyed, could not be legally enforced. Inform the Chiefs... no pressure should be applied to men to join the AAPC though in the meantime every encouragement should be given and opportunity afforded to genuine volunteers to enlist.⁷⁷

In July, a somewhat contradictory notice was released by the High Commissioner:

I have now heard from the Secretary of State regarding recruiting. He wishes to make it clear that he did not wish to raise objections to the utilisation of Native Authorities for the purpose of recruitment but that his intention was that the

⁷⁵J.F.A. Ajayi and M. Crowder, eds. History of West Africa Vol. 2 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972-4), 589; D. Killingray, "Military and Labour Recruitment in the Gold Coast during the Second World War," Journal of African History 23 (1) (1982), p. 89, 91, and 95.

⁷⁶Britain "demanded" obedience from colonial subjects--they were asked to identify themselves with the Allied effort against totalitarianism. India, in particular, felt the brunt of the pressure to "voluntarily" send in thousands of soldiers. This resulted in serious rebellions led by the Congress party, with 1,000 people killed and over 60,000 arrested. Warren L. Young, Minorities and the Military: A Cross-National Study in World Perspective (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1982), 160-161.

⁷⁷BNA 137/1/1, Letter from Government Secretary, Mafeking, to District Commissioners, dated 26 June 1942. Emphasis mine.

proceedings of the Chiefs should be watched so as to prevent abuse arising from unrelegated forms of virtual conscription imposed by Chiefs. On the assumption that I am satisfied that no such abuse may be expected from the maintenance of the present system the Secretary of State agrees it may continue.⁷⁸

Thus the dikgosi were highly encouraged to assist in British mobilization efforts, but were hampered by conflicting attitudes regarding the methods to be employed in recruiting.

We might wonder, why all the side-stepping around the issue of conscription? The Geneva Convention on Forced Labor of 1930 authorized governments to requisition the services of Africans when conditions threatened the "public welfare."⁷⁹ According to military historian Peter Parat, European nations since Napoleonic Days just "assumed the availability of manpower, and shared a tacit understanding that it was everyone's universal obligation to serve."⁸⁰ This "silent" consensus among military strategists was never explicitly acknowledged, discussed, or accounted for by them. Because of this assumption, "subjects of the crowns of Europe were uniformly transformed into "soldiers-of-the-nation," but in so becoming they did not receive the civil or political rights of citizens.⁸¹ Just as in World War One, Africans were expected

⁷⁸BNA S 136/6, Telegram from High Commissioner, Pretoria to Blaststove, Mafeking, 10 July 1942.

⁷⁹"Public welfare" was left purposefully vague so as to provide leeway in the law for colonial administrators to conscript labor for special purposes, i.e. military campaigns and important public works. J. Noon, Labor Problems of Africa, 7; "Forced Labour in Africa," Empire Vol. 5, no. 2 (July 1942), 2.

⁸⁰Peter Paret, "Justifying the Obligation of Military Service," JMH, Vol. 57, No. 5 (Special Issue) (October, 1993), 115-126. Though Paret was examining Prussian militarism in the nineteenth century, his comments hold true for both world conflicts in the twentieth century, especially with regards to colonial manpower. "The onesidedness of the literature-whether formal political theory, pedagogic mirrors of princes, or religious exhortations-reflects political reality: The availability of military manpower is a given, though according to circumstance it may cause greater or lesser effort to tap the resources."

⁸¹Carla Hesse, "Silences and the History of Representations of War: Comment on Peter Paret, "Justifying the Obligation of Military Service," and Michael Howard, "World War One: The Crisis in European History," JMH, Vol. 57, No. 5 (Special Issue) (October 1993), 140-144.

to participate as "subjects" not as "citizens".⁸² In 1939 some colonial "subjects" astutely recognized that the "contract on which conscription rested was formed between unequal partners."⁸³ Politicized Africans demanded recognition of citizenship for military service which automatically accompanied conscription in Europe.⁸⁴ As in 1917, inflated promises were also made by unscrupulous official authorities to lure recruits.

Due to critical manpower shortages during the war, the administrations in Kenya, Tanganyika, Nigeria, Gold Coast, Sierra Leone, Belgian Congo and the French colonies resorted to the use of forced labor (conscription).⁸⁵ In Nigeria, many Africans supported conscription, maintaining that if Nigerians fought in the war then this would be an even larger reason for granting Nigeria the freedom and independence for which the war was fought.⁸⁶ Some Kikuyu from Kenya also saw the war as an opportunity to vent their frustrations over colonial reform. They hoped that Jomo Kenyatta would return from London after the war to take up the fight against repressive legislation.⁸⁷ In

⁸²During the First World War, South African blacks fully expected the Constitution to be altered in order that brave soldiers of the Empire might be put in possession of the fullest rights and privileges of citizenship and all that pertain to *Subjects and Soldiers* of the British Empire. Albert Grundlingh, Fighting Their Own War, 51.

⁸³Peter Paret, "Justifying the Obligation of Military Service," 119.

⁸⁴*Ibid.*, 118. In the eighteenth century, every physically able male was obliged to serve; obedience to the ruler, deference to the local authorities, and acceptance of the teachings of the Church were justification enough. However, the rank and file were generally poor peasants and serfs forcibly recruited. Recruiting reforms came to Europe with the age of enlightenment and introduction of the concept of equality under the law. Ethically, free individuals willingly served the state, which in turn protected him and acted in his interest.

⁸⁵The French used conscription throughout their colonies during the war. As a conservative estimate, the French recruited in excess of 200,000 black Africans during the Second World War. See Myron Echenberg, Colonial Conscripts: The Tirailleurs Senegalais in French West Africa, 1857-1960 (NH: Heinemann, 1991), 88; and Nancy Lawler, "Soldiers of Misfortune: The Tirailleurs Senegalais of Cote d'Ivoire in World War Two" (Ph.D. diss., Northwestern University, 1988).

⁸⁶Peter B. Clarke, West Africans at War 1914-18; 1939-45 (London: Ethnographica, 1986), 81.

⁸⁷Robert Edgerton, Mau Mau: An African Crucible (N.Y.: Ballantine Books, 1989), 24; 47-48. Jomo Kenyatta was paid to lecture British soldiers, including Africans serving in the army, about Africa.

Bechuanaland, one observer has suggested that the majority of BaTswana were still politically inexperienced, and thus were not in a position to capitalize on such arguments.⁸⁸ Except for the diKgosi and a few educated professionals, campaigns for independence were nonexistent. It was not for several years after the war, that political parties were formed in the Protectorate.⁸⁹ Reactions to mobilization within the Protectorate were varied. Many BaTswana leaders were perhaps relatively "passive" and resigned to colonial pressures they thought they could not control.⁹⁰ They had, outwardly at least, come to terms with white dominance and the forms of government under which they had to live. This is not to argue that there was no nationalist consciousness in Bechuanaland.

Although there was a strong sense of black nationalism emanating from South African newspapers and a few educated leaders within the Protectorate, some rural MoTswana, at least initially, perhaps attempted to evade military service because they lacked a sense of personal obligation to the crown or because they opposed the war.⁹¹ As in the First World War, the war was viewed as merely a white man's quarrel--another war in far off lands with few repercussions for rural merafe life. Whatever happened in the war, it would not really affect them.

⁸⁸Mr. Seame Difatlho, interview with Fred Morton, 29 December 1981. Notes provided by F. Morton. According to S. Difatlho, "Chiefs enjoyed such freedom that they did not involve themselves or encourage their people to take up politics. The black people in the Protectorate were too ignorant to get involved in politics."

⁸⁹Societies or groups called "Balotlhanyi" were forerunners of political parties. A group called Ipelegeng collected money from AAPC members in the Middle East in support of Kgosi Molefi's reinstatement. Interview notes with Mr. Seame Difatlho, 29 December 1981.

⁹⁰Peter Parat, "Justifying the Obligation of Military Service," 120. According to Parat, "It is safe to assume that in most wars many soldiers, eventually if not from the start, fight unwillingly." (Leaders such as Tshekedi Khama, astutely picked up on the fact that the war would involve the BaTswana in one way or another. Instead of being "passive," he tried to the best of his ability to influence other diKgosi to actively seek the best possible solution while fulfilling colonial expectations.)

⁹¹Ibid. These strategies are common for individuals who feel they do not have a stake in the conflict.

Thus, differing opinions about the war often followed distinct class divisions within BaTswana society. Despite the rigorous propaganda campaign and simmering class divisions, the process of actually mobilizing Bechuanaland for war was a subject which elicited grave concerns among white administrators and the diKgosi especially in regards to labor issues.

To the British government, individuals within the Protectorate mattered very little.⁹² The empire was to be mobilized! However, contrary to colonial recruiting patterns in 1914, elements within the British government felt obliged during the Second World War to articulate administrative policies and make efforts at accommodating local needs.⁹³ Mandatory conscription instituted by the British administration would have violated the independence of the merafe to handle their own internal affairs. This would have been politically unacceptable to those in London who were advocating reform in the Protectorates.⁹⁴ Allowing the diKgosi freedom to work within the accepted norms of BaTswana society may have resulted in abuses, but it

⁹²Historically, the history of the British armed forces, navy as well as army, is in no small measure the history of impressments and bounties. Cynthia H. Enloe, Police, Military and Ethnicity, 1980), 97.

⁹³Captain A.B. Thruston, British colonial administrator for Uganda, offered a definition of a Protectorate forty years earlier:

It has always been the practice of England to govern her distant dominions as apart from her colonies, whenever feasible by the system of Protectorate; by which system their administrators are placed under a native Prince who governs by the advice of a native Protector. The advantages are obvious; for the people through force or habit, love for the person, or the prestige of his office, naturally submit to orders.

Quoted in J.A. Barnes, "Indigenous Politics and Colonial Administration, with Special Reference to Australia," Comparative Studies in Society and History, (1960) 2: 140.

⁹⁴Perhaps there was also a sense of guilt. Ethical and constitutional arguments on which conscription rested-mutual obligations binding citizen and state-were not going to be honored in the colonies. Britain evaded any direct promises of independence as a result of military service. However, unethical recruiters within the colonies sometimes made promises which Africans later came to realize were never going to be fulfilled.

was generally accepted that the diKgosi recognized they must act with some restraint. So far as merafe leaders were concerned, there was clearly a wide gulf between government principles and their practical application. Thus, although official and systematic conscription was not resorted to, informal labor compulsion served much the same purpose. It seems Raymond Betts was correct in his analysis of the colonial experience, "in historical retrospect imperialism can be seen as having occurred at two levels: that of the imagination, in which gallantry was frequently extolled; and that of real circumstance, in which crass exploitation all too often took place."⁹⁵

Despite the variety of carrot and stick methods employed, the government was unable to find sufficient recruits. To compound the problem, the Bechuanaland administration was very concerned about maintaining the flow of labor to the mines while still meeting military quotas. General Smuts stressed to the Gold Producers Committee that gold production needed to remain at the existing standard throughout the war. In 1941 Lord Harlech promised the President of the South African Chamber of Mines that if recruiting exceeded 5,000 men they would discuss mine requirements before raising additional companies.⁹⁶ The Chamber was supportive of army recruiting, as it had been in World War One, but refused to do anything which might influence those already on the mines to join the army.⁹⁷ When army requirements were subsequently increased, all recruiting for the mines was suspended indefinitely by the Bechuanaland authorities.⁹⁸

⁹⁵Raymond F. Betts, The False Dawn: European Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century (University of Minnesota Press, 1975), 243.

⁹⁶BNA S 136/6, Report on Proceedings of Resident Commissioner Conference, Pretoria, 15-16 October 1941.

⁹⁷BNA S 136/6, Notes on meeting held by High Commissioner, 13 May 1942.

⁹⁸General Auchinleck, C-in-C Middle East, had written the High Commissioner in May 1942 that 90,000 additional non-European troops were needed. He asked if the Territories could raise as their contribution an additional 15,000 men. He thought that the agricultural population of the Territories had been exploited to the maximum and that the mines were therefore the only remaining source. BNA S 136/6, Letter from

Concerned about the impact of this decision, Resident Commissioner Forsyth Thompson wrote District Commissioner Nettleton, "the need of the mines for labor is acute, and the longer recruiting is delayed for the mines the more damaging it is financially for the Protectorate. We have obligations to the mines and the mine authorities are getting a little restive."⁹⁹ At least some members of the colonial system, felt that they should interfere as little as possible with the principle of a "free market" in labor. In the administration's view, mine labor was just as important as recruiting for the AAPC because it provided gold for the prosecution of the war. The diKgosi also had financial concerns regarding the reduction of migrant labor. The charge that a number of diKgosi benefitted from the "selling" of their people into migrant labor is not entirely without foundation. A labor report from the BaNgwato district for 1939, claimed that £16,355 was forwarded to the district through the voluntary deferred pay system; besides considerable sums of money were sent as remittances to relatives and further sums were brought back by the miners themselves.¹⁰⁰ Although the colonial administration officially maintained that no one was being forced out of the Protectorate to work, they knew some diKgosi were sending people out to work in order to collect taxes, and that some were even being employed by South African recruiting companies.¹⁰¹ According to David Massey, "there was active collaboration between the administration, chiefs, and the South African mining companies in using the hut tax to force men out to work."¹⁰² There can be little doubt that the profit

General Auchinleck to High Commissioner, May 1942.

⁹⁹BNA S 136/5, Letter from Forsyth Thompson to District Commissioner, Nettleton, Serowe, 31 October 1941.

¹⁰⁰DCS 24/21, Report for BaNgwato District for 1939 dated 8 March 1940.

¹⁰¹Thus the Resident Commissioner could write in 1936, "I understand that some of our chiefs do receive remuneration from the recruiting corporations." BNA S 177/1/1, 6 October 1936 as found in Massey, "The Development of a Labor Reserve," 15.

¹⁰²Ibid. Another financial motive was deferred pay. Migrants from Ngamiland received £81,743 in deferred pay in 1950, and according to the DC "a large proportion of it was spent in the district". See BNA DCMA

motive took precedence over loyalty to the crown with some colonial administrators and diKgosi. Local villages stood to gain from wages repatriated from the South African mines. Others were adamantly opposed to economic arguments; they considered filling army labor requirements of first importance during the war. Tshekedi wrote his views to the District Commissioner at Serowe:

...I agree that recruiting for the mines can now be without special permission as far as my Territory, except Bokalaka and Botheti, is concerned. I am sorry to exclude Bokalaka and Botheti; I fully realise mining is an important work but not nearly as important as the call for active service; we are fighting for the national honour of our African people.¹⁰³

Conflicting goals regarding the maximum benefit to be derived from the Protectorate's manpower plagued the administration throughout the war.¹⁰⁴ Figures published officially by the Union Government show that the supply of labor from Bechuanaland to the mines was significantly reduced during the war. The number of BaTswana laborers going to South Africa dropped from 19,898 in 1940 to 12,792 in 1943.¹⁰⁵ Despite this reported drop in migrant labor, the manpower situation within the Protectorate was becoming grave. The District Commissioner at Gaborone estimated in 1943, that 80% of the men fit for military service, mine and other hard labor, and farm work were absent on long service contracts. He stressed, "if this state of affairs continues very long, serious consequences to the social and economic life in Bechuanaland will

5/15, Annual Report for 1950, Ngamiland and Chobe District.

¹⁰³BNA S 136/5, Letter from Tshekedi Khama to District Commissioner, Serowe, 2 November 1941. Tshekedi was having trouble recruiting among the Bokalaka (mostly Kalanga) and Boteti where he had little authority.

¹⁰⁴In 1943, Forsyth Thompson invited I. Schapera, Professor of Social Anthropology at the University of Cape Town, to study and report on the effects of migrant labor upon the life of the BaTswana people. His tour of the Protectorate occurred at the peak of AAPC recruitment. Nearly 10,000 men had enlisted--a figure almost equal to that of mine labor. Schapera and others were growing increasingly concerned about the economic viability of families within the Protectorate.

¹⁰⁵J. Shuckburgh, "Civil History of the War," 43. Total African population was estimated at 257,064 in 1944. H.A. Wierschhoff, Colonial Policies in Africa (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1944), 11.

result."¹⁰⁶

New demands for labor (war and mines) continued to pour in from 1943-1945, so what was the solution? Unfortunately, there were no mandated limits on migrant labor within the Protectorate to stop young men from going to South Africa.¹⁰⁷ One obvious solution for military recruiters, was to canvas areas where there was a surplus population. Historically, this was in the southern districts where there was a shortage of cultivable land due to land alienation to white settlers.¹⁰⁸ However, as Isaac Schapera discovered in his 1943 survey, many men in the southern districts had already left for South Africa when they discovered AAPC recruiting had begun.¹⁰⁹ Kgosi Tshekedi argued the mines had to make greater sacrifices during the war, and return these men. He stressed that if "free mine recruiting was allowed to continue, it would open the door for a minority who deliberately avoided service in the AAPC and who were, in fact, deserters from his own regiments!"¹¹⁰

A factor related to the migrant labor issue was the rate of pay offered for military service. According to District Commissioner, Ellenberger, "the average Motswana is a very unskilled laborer and there is little scope for his services within the Territory. The majority of able-bodied males seek employment beyond the borders of the Territory as farm hands or mine laborers."¹¹¹ The average monthly wage for Africans

¹⁰⁶BNA DCG 3/4, Annual Report, 1941.

¹⁰⁷In some British colonies, there were set limits on male migration. In Bechuanaland, the unofficial limit was set at 30% or 20,000 men (war and mines). Official Civil History of the War, 43; John A. Noon, Labor Problems of Africa (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1944), 35; BNA S 136/6, Notes on Meeting Held by High Commissioner, 13 May 1942.

¹⁰⁸I. Schapera, Migrant Labour and Tribal Life, Tables I, IV, XII, XXX. Also David Massey, "The Development of a Labor Reserve: The Impact of Colonial Rule on Botswana," African Studies Center, Working Paper No. 34 (Boston University, 1980), 22; BNA 20/4, Treasury Circular No. 22 of 1942.

¹⁰⁹Ibid.

¹¹⁰BNA S 136/5, Letter from District Commissioner, Nettelton to Forsyth Thompson, Mafeking, 1 November 1941.

¹¹¹BNA DCS 24/21, Annual Report District Commissioner, Serowe, 1939.

working in the mines during the war are listed below:¹¹²

Year	Gold	Coal		Diamonds	
	Witwatersrand	Transvaal	Natal	Cape	Transvaal
1939	59s 1d	53s 7d	49s 10d	80s 9d	71s 5d
1940	59s 7d	55s 3d	50s 3d	82s 1d	69s 3d

Note: One shilling equaled £.05 or 20 shillings per pound. Twelve pennies equaled one shilling.¹¹³

Starting pay was approximately 2/2d per day.

William Beinart's study of Pondo migrants shows that men who moved into skilled positions, such as drillers, could make as much as £7 a month.¹¹⁴

Antonio Katiba, a miner in Johannesburg, said he was paid well, 25d a day, as a driller.¹¹⁵

Other wage earners within the Protectorate working as teachers, clerks, tax collectors, etc. were paid varying amounts. The average salaries received by trained professionals were £2.10/- to £5.10/- per month with few exceptions beyond £5.10/- per month.¹¹⁶

The non-European rates of pay (per day) for the AAPC were the same as for the S.A. Native Military Corps:¹¹⁷

¹¹²Official Year Book of the Union of South Africa No. 22 (1941), 260.

¹¹³The British Army in WWII, 227. Monetary exchanges for 1942.

¹¹⁴"Worker consciousness, ethnic particularism and nationalism: the experience of a South African migrant, 1930-1960," in Shula Marks and Stanley Trapido, eds. The Politics of Race, Class & Nationalism in Twentieth Century South Africa (London and NY: Longman, 1987), 296.

¹¹⁵Antonio Katiba (KiMbundu), interview by Barry Morton, 20 November 1993, Disaneng.

¹¹⁶BNA DCS 24/21, Report on Ngwato District for 1939, Note on Labor; BNA S 135/7, Letter from T.K. to Resident Commissioner, 26 February 1941. Approximately 120 Africans were employed in trading stores and 190 men were employed by merafe administrations in various duties.

¹¹⁷R.A.R. Bent, Ten Thousand Men of Africa, 109.

PIONEER CORPS PAY CHARTS FOR AFRICANS AND EUROPEANS

African	W/O Dep	Deferred	Prof Pay	Trade Pay
Private	1/6	9d	2d	Varied
Lce/Cpl	1/9	9d	2d	Varied
Cpl	2/-	9d	2d	Varied
Lce/Sgt	n/a			Varied
Sgt	2/6	9d	2d	Varied
CSM	4/2	9d	2d	Varied
RSM	n/a			Varied

* N/A means data not available in sources consulted.

** Trade pay was authorized on an individual level depending on acquired skills and special needs of the Pioneer Corps.

African	W/Dep	Fam Allot	Prof Pay	Trade Pay
Private	2/3	1/6	2d	Varied
Lce/Cpl	2/6	1/6	2d	Varied
Cpl	2/9	1/6	2d	Varied
Lce/Sgt	4/-	1/6	2d	Varied
Sgt	3/3	1/6	2d	Varied
CSM	4/2	1/6	2d	Varied
RSM	10/-	1/6	2d	Varied

* African ministers and catechists (NCOs) received varied rates of pay.

** all rates included 1/6 allotment to dependents. This allowance remained constant, irrespective of the size of the family or degree of relationship, whether there was an aged mother to support or a wife with a number of children. Nearly all men nominated a dependent.¹

European	W/O Dep	W/Dep	Fam Allot	Prof Pay
Private	2/6	6/6		Varied
Lce/Cpl	n/a			Varied
Cpl	n/a			Varied
Lce/Sgt	n/a			Varied
Sgt	6/6	9/6	3/-	Varied
CSM	8/6	11/6	3/-	Varied
RSM	9/6	12/6	3/-	Varied

*Married personnel also received family allowances: wife, 17/- a week; first child, 7/6 a week; second child, 5/6 a week; third child, 4/- a week.²

¹ BNA DCG 3/2, Memorandum on Pay and Allowances, 10 July 1942.

² Pay and Allowances of the Armed Forces (London, 1942), Cmd. 6385.

African drill instructors at Lobatsi earned 2/4 per day.¹¹⁸ Interpreters were paid an extra 2d a day for qualification in English, provided this did not forfeit their chances of getting tradesmen's or proficiency pay.¹¹⁹ Bechunana drawing Trade Pay were: clerks, armourer's assistants, carpenters, drivers, educational instructors, nursing orderlies, storemen, tailors, boot repairers, and sanitary assistants.

During the First World War black soldiers in the SANLC had been paid 2/-d per day. A 3d increase in twenty-five years was considered unsatisfactory by the soldiers. The pay for military service may have compared favorably with certain peace-time wages, but it was not enough for some to risk one's life. One soldier complained that those who did enlist in the army were not appreciated, "we have answered the call, irrespective of low wages, and had to leave decent occupations to join the army".¹²⁰

Africans also knew that they earned substantially less than European soldiers.¹²¹ The issue of poor pay received frequent news coverage during the war: "The limited response by the urban native population to the appeal for recruits for the Army arose out of the hopelessly inadequate pay of the native recruit", said Mrs W.G. Ballinger (South African M.P.).¹²² It was especially criticized as inadequate for urban dwellers and for those who live on a "civilized standard" in rural areas.¹²³ The pay was inadequate in the cities because of the high cost of rent which reached £1 per month during the

¹¹⁸BTA 20/1 Box No. 20, Memo on military training camp, manpower and expenditures.

¹¹⁹DO 35 1184/Y1062/3, Letter from Lord Harlech to Brigadier Salisbury Jones, 30 January 1943.

¹²⁰"African Soldier and His Fellowmen," The Bantu World (21 February 1942), 4.

¹²¹According to Sekamane Kemosi and Ratlou Sebetlela Ketshabile from Molepolole, black American soldiers they met told AAPC men that they were underpaid and taken advantage of. Kweneng Historical Texts, 1979-80, Interviews by Brian Mokopakgosi, University of Botswana Library.

¹²²"African Soldiers and Poor Pay," The Bantu World, 8 November 1940, 1.

¹²³"Africans and Military Service," The Bantu World, 18 January 1941, 4.

1940s. Of course the bulk of the AAPC were from rural backgrounds in Bechuanaland, but even here the educated African (those who attained their Standard Eight certificate or higher) was highly disappointed in the pay.¹²⁴ "Push/pull" factors such as drought, health and physical fitness, labor issues and local political conditions also hampered recruiting and colonial administrators were never quite sure how to manipulate them to their advantage.

The High Commissioner noted in a letter to General Salisbury Jones in January 1942 that recruitment *might* suffer because of drought conditions prevailing in the Transvaal and southern areas of the Protectorate.¹²⁵ It was predicted in December 1941 that there would be a serious shortage of food and seed supplies in the New Year if the drought persisted.¹²⁶ In January, the rains had not returned and many people had not yet plowed their fields.¹²⁷ The basic commodity of the African diet was mealie meal, of which the price had risen enormously because of the drought and war-time inflation.¹²⁸ All the Resident Commissioners expressed concerns about maintaining a nucleus of men at home to supervise food production.¹²⁹ There was a shortage of grain in 1942 and 1943 which forced the administration to import 25,000 bags of maize from South Africa.¹³⁰ This is in comparison with 7,785 bags of maize imported in 1936, and an average of 5,820 bags imported annually

¹²⁴S.A.I.R.R. Papers, B43.7.2, "Memorandum on Pay and Allowances of Non-European Soldiers with Special Reference to African Soldiers".

¹²⁵BNA S 136/6, Letter from Lord Harlech to Brigadier Salisbury-Jones, 5 January 1942.

¹²⁶"Urgent Appeal to Farmers in Drought Areas," Mafeking Mail, (12 December 1941), 3.

¹²⁷BNA S 136/6, Resident Commissioner, Mafeking to Lord Harlech, 10 January 1942. Only 1/5 of the men in the BaMabete and BaTlokwa Reserves were at home for the plowing season. Women and children were trying to do all the work. According to the D.C., "the prospects of a successful harvest were not encouraging." BNA DCG 3/4, Annual Report 1942.

¹²⁸Mafeking Mail, 25 July 1942, Front Page.

¹²⁹"Urgent Appeal to Farmers in Drought Areas," Mafeking Mail, 17 December 1941, 5.

¹³⁰BNA S 195/4/1-3, Annual Reports of the Department of Agriculture, BNA V33, Weather and Crop Reports.

between 1937 and 1939.¹³¹ As in World War One, drought was also a "pull" factor. According to Mirjana Roth, drought conditions in South Africa between 1941 and 1943 facilitated recruiting for the Native Military Corps.¹³² In the north eastern districts of the Transvaal, the mealie crop production was extremely poor due to a severe infestation of "streak disease". Many African families suffered acute privation because there was not enough mealies obtainable in South Africa. "It is unlikely that the recruiting for the Native Military Corps would have been so successful if these adverse economic conditions had not forced many rural Africans to join up".¹³³ For those who were economically devastated by the drought in southern Africa, military service was one way they could provide for their families.¹³⁴

Health was another factor influencing levels of recruitment. In Ngamiland (northeast region of Bechuanaland) an outbreak of sleeping sickness in 1941 was such a cause for concern.¹³⁵ At the Maun hospital, 320 cases of sleeping sickness were reported. Of these, 87 cases proved to be fatal. A campaign against the tsetse fly was undertaken in 1942.¹³⁶ A grant of £90,000 was sanctioned, under the Colonial Development and Welfare Act, in support of the campaign.¹³⁷ By 1944 sleeping sickness was under control, but other epidemics then swept through Bechuanaland. In Francistown, malaria took three hundred lives

¹³¹Ibid.

¹³²Mirjana Roth, "If you give us rights we will fight": Black Involvement in the Second World War," SAHJ, 15 (November, 1983), 94.

¹³³Ibid.

¹³⁴According to D. Kiyaga-Mulindwa, "the years 1940-45 were characterised by late rains in February and March instead of November or early December. Such rains were not fully utilised because of the absence of so many able-bodied men from the country who would have normally carried out the hectic agricultural tasks that accompany late rains." "Bechuanaland Protectorate and WWII," 46.

¹³⁵BNA S 136/7, Letter from Thompson to Lord Harlech, 26 August 1942.

¹³⁶BNA S 136/7, Letter from Resident Commissioner to Lord Harlech, 17 September 1942. This letter actually describes the eradication campaign in detail.

¹³⁷J. Shuckburgh, "Civil History of the War," 40.

in 1944. Outbreaks of small-pox and bubonic plague occurred throughout the country in the same year. These health risks were a recurring phenomena in the Protectorate, but during the war years they caused an additional strain on the administration as labor was in short supply both at home and abroad. It must be stressed that "during the war development of the preventive aspect of medicine was largely at a standstill. The curative services were maintained and, although the work expanded very considerably, this was carried on with a reduced establishment."¹³⁸

The lack of vigor and vitality among the population in general was also an impediment to recruiting. From the very outset of mobilization, health issues were recognized as a factor which needed to be addressed. This is reflected in the following communication between a missionary doctor and a military recruitment officer in 1940:

I am enclosing herewith a review of the health position as requested. It is difficult to get a general idea of the health of the community as so many of the patients who come to dispensary have either some minor ailment that they think I can't do much harm about or else are seriously ill having previously tried all available native doctors! As far as I can see the people are just of rather poor physique without suffering from any outstanding diseases except syphilis.¹³⁹

The limited number of medical officers within the Protectorate caused a backlog in medical examinations of the men. An idea of the scope of the problem faced by medical personnel is shown in the estimate from BaNgwato district that 3600 men would have to be examined in order to secure 2500 fit recruits.¹⁴⁰ Malnutrition was the most serious problem in the Protectorate and the main cause of rejection. The medical officers were never impressed by the overall physical condition of the recruits, attributing their poor health to a complete lack of sanitation

¹³⁸Ibid., 41.

¹³⁹BNA DCS 24/22, Letter from London Mission Hospital, Sefhare, to Captain Nettleton, DC, Serowe, dated 12 July 1940

¹⁴⁰BNA S 136/3, District Commissioner Nettleton, Serowe to Government Secretary, Mafeking, 16 August 1941.

and hygienic knowledge and a diet lacking in protein.¹⁴¹ Venereal disease and tuberculosis were prevalent among mine workers and easily spread to others upon return to the Protectorate.¹⁴² Women warned their men against consorting with the opposite sex while at the mines because of the danger of venereal disease, but their warnings were rarely heeded.¹⁴³ A LMS hospital reported:

Syphilis is the commonest disease seen in out-patients. This is partly because the incidence is high and partly because the people have great faith in the injections treatment. If they recognize their symptoms as those of syphilis they are therefore willing to come to hospital instead of trying the native doctors. Apart from the obvious cases of syphilis, the condition seems to be a big factor in the general low standard of health of the community.¹⁴⁴

Syphilis was effectively treated by the medical officers but it was reported that "reinfection, to a great extent, neutralized its benefits."¹⁴⁵ When recruiting started, all medical officers were instructed to see that prospective recruits rejected for venereal disease received treatment; as soon as they were sufficiently cured they were attested if otherwise fit. Arrangements were made for courses of treatment to be completed, if necessary, while the men were in training at Lobatsi Camp. The total number of cases of VD of all types recorded among the men in training, inclusive of new and old infections was 458.¹⁴⁶ Of these, approximately 35 were discharged.¹⁴⁷ Overall, the

¹⁴¹BNA S 136/2, Early Recruitment Issues, Nettleton to Government Secretary, 26 July 1941; BNA S 136/6, Letter from C.N.A. Clarke to Lord Harlech, 10 January 1941; BNA DCG 3/4, Annual Report Gaborone, 1941.

¹⁴²BNA DCG 3/4, Annual Report for Gaborone for 1941. It is interesting to note that the greatest number of soldiers who died while serving in the AAPC died from disease (a total of 165) not of combat related injuries.

¹⁴³William Beinart, "Worker Consciousness, Ethnic Particularism and Nationalism: the Experiences of a South African Migrant, 1930-1960" in The Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism in Twentieth Century South Africa (London and New York: Longman Group, 1987), 295.

¹⁴⁴BNA DCS 24/22, Letter from LMS Hospital, Sefhare to Captain Nettleton, DC Serowe, dated 12 July 1940.

¹⁴⁵Ibid. At Gaborone in 1941 there were 2329 new cases of Syphilis, 1600 were repeat cases. At Ramoutsa, there were 555 new cases; 112 repeat. See also "Municipal Health Department Annual Report for 1939-40," Mafeking Mail (2 August 1940), 4-5.

¹⁴⁶BNA S 136/6, Letter from C.N.A. Clarke to Lord Harlech, 23 January 1942.

percentage of medical rejects was as high as 53% in some areas, and generally speaking was estimated at not less than 40%.¹⁴⁸

In order to determine the manpower available in the Protectorate, a survey was conducted in August 1942. For the purpose of the survey, several categories of physical fitness were identified:¹⁴⁹

- Category I: Fit for Pioneers (Military Classes A and A1)
- Category II: Fit for Mine Labor (Military Class B)
- Category III: Not up to Military Class but fit for some classes of heavy labor on farms, roads, etc.
- Category IV: Fit for ordinary farm labor
- Category V: Fit for cultivation in Native Reserve
- Category VI: Totally unfit for any effective work

Each regiment that had been called up was divided into the above sub-categories and then the District Commissioners identified the totals. It was a statistical nightmare for the medical officers and administration but several conclusions emerged from the survey. It was quite clear from the figures that too many men were being medically classified as unfit for military service from the official point of view. The Resident Commissioner determined that perhaps the medical qualifications needed to be revised:

I informed Col Boothby yesterday that it seems to be the opinion in your districts that the Government Medical Officer was insisting on too high standard of physical fitness for the army, that he had in many cases rejected recruits who had just come back from the mines where they had for several months previously performed hard physical labor, and that it might be desirable in the interests of recruiting to send a Medical Officer from the AAPC to Lobatsi, who is familiar with the standards required by the army, through experience, knows when the requirements can be relaxed.¹⁵⁰

Medical standards were relaxed in the fall of 1942 but, even then, the results were disappointing.¹⁵¹ In the largest BaNgwato Reserve, only 556

¹⁴⁷Ibid.

¹⁴⁸BNA S 136/4, Memorandum on the Bechuanaland Protectorate Group of the AAPC, no date; S 136/6, Letter from C.N.A. Clarke to Lord Harlech, dated 12 March 1942.

¹⁴⁹The model for the medical categories was adopted from Kenya. BNA S 93/6, Circular Memorandum on Manpower 1942.

¹⁵⁰BNA DCG 3/2, Letter from Forsyth Thompson to DC Gaberones and Mochudi regarding medical exams, 17 September 1941.

¹⁵¹The same problem was identified in Gold Coast. According to David Killingray, "Throughout the war there was a high rejection rate on medical grounds but when the army urgently required men it lowered the

previously rejected men were attested.¹⁵² The lowering of medical standards may have resulted in the recruitment of a higher percentage of older men. Among the BaRolong, for instance, of the 45 men recruited from the Reserve into the AAPC by December 1942 at least 18 were aged between 45 and 50, and of the 120 males who did not qualify for AAPC recruitment, 45 of them were aged more than 50.¹⁵³ One ex-soldier, Trouble Gaborone from Tlokeng, was 37 years old with three children when he enlisted in the AAPC. He remembers that "the first companies recruited in 1941 were composed of men in his age group or older".¹⁵⁴ This is verified by British sources, "many members of the AAPC were older married men".¹⁵⁵

The survey results also caused some alarm in the districts. The statistics revealed that more than 80% of the men in Categories I to IV were absent from the Territory.¹⁵⁶ When another 5,000 men were requested by military officials in mid-1942, the administration was forced to concede that they had "just about exhausted the possibilities of recruiting".¹⁵⁷ Recruiting for the AAPC was temporarily stopped in all districts, except Kweneng and BoKalaka area of Ngwato District in November 1942.¹⁵⁸

III. Strategies of African Resistance

The conditions mentioned above, migrancy to South Africa, poor

standard of health and height and worked on the assumption that army feeding, medical attention and exercise over a period of three months would raise recruits to the necessary physical standard". "Military and Labour Recruitment in the Gold Coast During the Second World War," JAH, 23 (1982), 88.

¹⁵²BNA S 136/7, Figures provided by Forsyth Thompson to Lord Harlech, 19 October 1942.

¹⁵³D. Kiyaga-Mulindwa, "Bechuanaland Protectorate and WWII," 45.

¹⁵⁴Trouble Gaborone E.C. 2165, interview by author, Tape recording, Tlokeng, 19 July 1994.

¹⁵⁵PRO DO 35 1184 Y106, Recruitment in High Commission Territories, Telegram from S.A. (B.B.S) to D.O., dated 5 April 1946.

¹⁵⁶Ibid.

¹⁵⁷BNA S 136/7, Letter from Resident Commissioner, Mafeking to Lord Harlech, 19 October 1942.

¹⁵⁸BNA DCG 3/7, Letter from Government Secretary, Nettelton, to Resident Commissioner and all DC's, 7 November 1942.

pay, drought, health problems and manpower deficiencies were all factors which affected recruitment. Earlier, we examined propaganda and recruiting from the colonial administrations' point of view along with the diKgosi's many troubles. However, one very important aspect of recruiting has not been discussed in detail thus far are the individual and group strategies of African resistance in 1941. African resistance to colonial demands assumed a multitude of historical forms, but its consistent object was "the avoidance, disturbance, or destruction of one aspect or another of the system of domination".¹⁵⁹ Although there was no effective, large-scale resistance campaign against the war in the Protectorate, many young BaTswana men made it known that they considered the call to serve another attempt to control their lives. They wanted the freedom to choose, within limits, the working conditions which offered them the best comparative benefits.¹⁶⁰ As William Beinart pointed out in his labor study of Cape workers in German South West Africa between 1909-1912, African workers with specialized skills understood labor options open to them and actively pursued jobs which paid higher wages and offered greater job security.¹⁶¹ Despite the propaganda in African newspapers and the support of certain diKgosi, archival reports on recruiting and interviews of veterans confirm a less than enthusiastic response towards military service among villagers, especially service as noncombatants. Thus, the opportunities for

¹⁵⁹B. Bozzoli, "History, experience and culture", in B. Bozzoli, ed. Town and Countryside in the Transvaal, 28 as quoted in Albert Grundlingh, Fighting Their Own War, 68.

¹⁶⁰Alternately, D. Massey argues the matter of choice regarding work was often taken away from the BaTswana. Collaboration among the Protectorate administration, a chief, and the mining companies forced men to migrate in order to pay hut taxes. Desertion laws resulted in "the most basic right of a worker-the right to withhold his/her labor power by either refusing to work or by walking off the job-was denied workers from Botswana. If apprehended, deserters from the mines were usually given the choice of paying a fine, going to prison, or returning to the mines to complete their contract. "The Development of a Labor Reserve," 16.

¹⁶¹William Beinart, "Jamani," Hidden Struggles in Rural South Africa (London: James Currey Ltd., 1987), 166-190.

resistance and how they were maximized deserves further attention.

One of the most innovative and common strategies of avoiding military service was employed by working men who were on long term mining contracts in South Africa (usually 9 months). These men simply did not come home after their contracts expired, but reengaged for further service. They were purposefully remaining in the Union in order to avoid enlistment. Perhaps, as Albert Grundlingh explains in his study of South African soldiers in the First World War, the attitudes of black mineworkers towards the war were being shaped by the harshness of their labor experiences.¹⁶² He wrote, "the sympathies did not seem very much against the idea of the British regime being deposed--a feeling which was shared by many natives who suffered at the hands of the Transvaal Gold Mining Estates Ltd."¹⁶³ Although veterans expressed no such sentiments during interviews, migrancy figures provide evidence that a significant proportion of BaTswana men avoided returning home during the first year of recruiting. It was estimated that out of 2,278 BaNgwato men recruited by the Native Recruiting Corporation in 1940, at least 750 of the men had not returned to the reserve in 1941.¹⁶⁴ Officials suggested that South African labor recruitment stop in order to allow men to return home and perhaps be induced to volunteer. Tshekedi Khama wanted to take the recruitment campaign directly to the mines, "we have no men here; let us call them back from the mines".¹⁶⁵ South African labor agents resisted all efforts on the part of Bechunaland authorities to recruit directly in gold-mining areas. Growing militancy by some workers in South Africa was already causing

¹⁶²Albert Grundlingh, Fighting Their Own War, 16.

¹⁶³Ibid.

¹⁶⁴The total number of men in Johannesburg who had not returned was estimated at between 1,750-2,000. Of these 850 were considered fit for military service. BNA S 93/6, Circular Memorandum to all DC's on African Manpower, 29 Aug 1942.

¹⁶⁵BNA S 136/6, Memorandum from T.K. to Resident Commissioner, dated March 1942; S 136/7, Letter from Thompson to Lord Harlech, 26 August 1942.

Union officials deep concern and recruitment for the AAPC was seen as direct competition to the needs of the SANMC.¹⁶⁶

Those men who returned from the mines during peak recruiting periods were targets for military recruiters. BaTswana migrants, despite anti-white sentiments, were not immune to colonial propaganda and the pressures of merafe headmen:

We thought recruiting had stopped so we came back from the mines for a holiday, but now we are here and have heard what the Chief and the recruiters have to say, we feel that we might just as well join the AAPC as to go back to the mines.¹⁶⁷

Clearly, BaTswana migrants were not prepared to stay away from their homes indefinitely.¹⁶⁸ The majority still had strong links in rural Bechuanaland villages, investing some of their wages in cattle, ploughs and household implements.¹⁶⁹ Staying away in South Africa may have been the most effective way of avoiding military recruiters, but such tactics were only temporary. Young male migrants would need to return home to marry, check on their cattle, and maintain familial relationships. In some respects, young men during this period might have been expected to perform military service to realize their future goals. In 1942, Molefi Pilane, who had just returned from the Middle East for recruiting duty in the Protectorate, discovered that a number of BaKgatla in Johannesburg were willing to return to the Protectorate and join the AAPC.¹⁷⁰ They were unhappy with compound conditions and underground work. After the popularity of the AAPC had increased, due to news reports of the important work being done, this strategy of "hiding out" was not employed as frequently. Figures from the BaNgwato district for

¹⁶⁶According to Edward Roux, "recruiting had suffered badly in South Africa because of the government's decision that Afaricans were not to bear arms." Time Longer Than Rope, 306.

¹⁶⁷BNA S 136/7, Letter from Resident Commissioner, Mafeking to Lord Harlech, 17 September 1942.

¹⁶⁸Mine contracts were for nine months. W. Beinart, "Worker consciousness, ethnic particularism and nationalism", 296.

¹⁶⁹Ibid.

¹⁷⁰Mr. Moreme Rammala, Morema Ward, "Interview Notes on BaKgatla History: by R.F. Morton, 17 December 1981," Compiled and edited by R.F. Morton, Department of History, University of Botswana, (1982): 20-21.

1942 reflect a possible shift away from this strategy:

RECRUITING FIGURES FOR AUGUST TO OCTOBER 1942
BANGWATO RECRUITS FROM ELEVEN DISTRICTS

FROM THE MINES	PREV MEDICALLY REJECTED	PREV UNRELEASED BY CHIEF	FRESH RECRUITS
841	556	216	256

Another method of escape was to flee to another Reserve and hope to be saved by anonymity. According to one informant, when the news reached the villagers that the regiments were rounding up men for the AAPC, many young men disappeared into the bush.¹⁷¹ When Kqosi Matlala took a roll at kgotla it was determined that 63 men were within the Reserve and of that number 20 were away "watering cattle" and 19 had run away.¹⁷² The District Commissioner at Gaborone, worried about BaTlokwa escapees, requested that the District Commissioner at Mochudi send home those young men who were in the BaKgatlal Reserve. He promised to return BaKgatlal run-aways in return.¹⁷³ It is interesting to note the response of these two diKqosi's:

"Chief Mmusi informs me that when in Mafeking the Chiefs agreed amongst themselves that if any of their people were found 'hiding out' in another Reserve the Chief of that reserve should recruit them and despatch them to Lobatsi. He wishes Matlala to do that with the BaKgatlal you refer to and he will do the same with the BaTlokwa."¹⁷⁴

Other headmen found it difficult or impossible to track down men who were hiding in the bush despite regimental "marauding" of villages.¹⁷⁵ SHE Bakwali (Kalanga) of Tati district never bothered to relocate run-aways. One ex-serviceman complained that "Bo-wotji" (that is those people who avoided going to war by taking refuge in the local hills)

¹⁷¹Kgosi B.R. Baletloa, interview by author, Tape recording, Gaborone West Kgotla, 13 July 1994.

¹⁷²BNA DCG 3/2, Administrative Report by DC Ellenberger, Gaborone, in August 1941.

¹⁷³BNA DCG 3/7, Letter from DC Gaborone to DC Mochudi on 25 August 1942.

¹⁷⁴Ibid.

¹⁷⁵Kgosi B.R. Baletloa, E.C. 10035, interview by author, Tape recording, Gaborone West, 13 July 1994.

were "deliberately exempted from the war while stubborn or trouble-making people were sent".¹⁷⁶ Others talked about running away from the police or other AAPC recruiters said that they were afraid of dying in a foreign war.¹⁷⁷ Some ran away to Namibia or Angola in order to avoid military service.

Recruitment quotas were also avoided through discriminatory selection processes. Chiefs and family heads avoided compliance by withholding individuals important in the local economy and administration. Thus, some men with merafe connections volunteered but were not sent by the diKgosi to join the AAPC. The diKgosi had the power to withhold important headmen or restrict the number of sons from any one family who could serve. No head of a family would send his strongest and fittest men unless forced to do so.¹⁷⁸ At first, general policy was that only one son from a family should go; later the restrictions were relaxed to allow two sons per family. According to veteran Matutu Kolobe, "he and two of his brothers were in the same company. The diKgosi placed two of his cousins in another company". In Tlokweng there were no restrictions on the number of family members who could go to war, whereas in Ngamiland only one son was allowed".¹⁷⁹ Obviously, the application of the policy was not uniform throughout the Protectorate which must have caused some disgruntlement. Some families encouraged their sons to run away in the hopes of avoiding family loss and pain due to injury or death during the war.¹⁸⁰ The diKgosi and headmen who were not prepared to cooperate with authorities could

¹⁷⁶K. Nlumbi, "The Life and Career of SHE Bakwali Kgosi Habangana IV of Mapoka Village 1930-1987: Interview by Teedzani Davies Thapelo, 27 June 1989," in University of Botswana Research Essay, May 1990.

¹⁷⁷See Kweneng Historical Texts, 1979-80. Interviews by Brian Mokopakgosi on the Second World War, University of Botswana Library.

¹⁷⁸D. Killingray, "Military and Labour Recruitment," 89.

¹⁷⁹Matutu Kolobe E.C. 3019, Tlokweng, interview by author, Tape recording, 19 July 1994. Also interviews conducted by Barry Morton in Ngamiland between 1993-4, transcripts available.

¹⁸⁰K. Nlumbi, "The Life and Career of SHE Bakwali Kgosi Habangana IV of Mapoka Village 1930-1987: Interview by Teedzani Davies Thapelo, 27 June 1989," Research Essay, University of Botswana, May 1990.

selectively decide who went off to war. In this way, criminals, political rivals, and misfits were also enlisted into the AAPC.

BaTswana men also avoided military service by purchasing railway tickets to the Union. In 1941 any African could purchase a ticket at Ramoutsa Station and proceed to the Union without a pass authorizing them to leave the Protectorate.¹⁸¹ Often the men boarded trains at smaller sidings and paid the guards as they boarded. Soon after recruiting began, it was noticed by the Station Master that ticket sales were going up. In July, Ramoutsa Station sold 132 tickets to the Union and Gaborone Station sold 109 tickets.¹⁸² After some investigating, it was found that a significant proportion of these men did not have mine contracts. As soon as the problem was identified, Station Managers were required to check for passes. In order to circumvent the stricter system, wives were sent to purchase tickets for their husbands.¹⁸³ In this way, women played a pivotal role in assisting their men avoid military service.

Those who did not hide but refused to enlist were an embarrassment to the diKgosi, especially if they were members of the royal household. Kgosi Matlala's son refused to join the AAPC and tried to gain a pass illegally to leave the Protectorate from an African member of the District Commissioner's staff.¹⁸⁴ Earlier, the same young man had also been reported to be "an objector and of bad influence on the youth with regard to AAPC recruitment."¹⁸⁵ District Commissioner Ellenberger, upset over Kgosi's attitude, applied great pressure on Kgosi Matlala to

¹⁸¹It seems that Union Immigration Officers had been lax in checking passes of Africans travelling from the Protectorate, especially if the destination was Mafeking. BNA DCG 3/2, District Commissioner Ellenberger to Resident Commissioner, 5 August 1941.

¹⁸²BNA DCG 3/2, Report by District Commissioner Ellenberger to Resident Commissioner, 5 August 1941.

¹⁸³BNA DCG 3/3, Letter from Ellenberger to Government Secretary on recruitment evasion, 19 June 1942.

¹⁸⁴BNA DCG 3/2, Letter from C.M. Mogashula to DC Gaborone, 14 July 1941.

¹⁸⁵BNA DCG 3/2, District Commissioner Ellenberger to Resident Commissioner, 5 August 1942.

persuade him to join the Pioneer Corps:

The refusal of the Chief's eldest son to join the AAPC caused much dismay in the Tribe, and the Chief stated openly in kgotla that he would not succeed him in the Chieftainship. This is an important point which should not be overlooked when the time comes to give official recognition to Matlala's successor.¹⁸⁶

In September 1942, the rebellious son was medically examined and pronounced fit for service, but again he failed to report for duty.

A common strategy, employed by different groups including royal families, merafe officials and colonial administrators, was intimidation. Headmen were afraid they would be deposed if they failed to enlist men. A good example of this recruiting strategy in Bechuanaland was the enlistment of another important royal personage, Molefi of the Kgafela Kgatla, who was forced by the administration to volunteer. Molefi had been something of a trouble-maker before the war and had been removed from the office of bogosi by Resident Commissioner Charles Rey.¹⁸⁷ It was suggested that he join the AAPC in order to "grow up" and earn the right to regain his office.¹⁸⁸ The office of bogosi was temporarily filled by individuals acceptable to Molefi and the merafe. Molefi travelled to North Africa and the Middle East to be with the BaKgatla companies there. He was promoted to Regimental Sergeant Major during the war and performed well. After the war, the Resident Commissioner, Forsyth Thompson, overlooked reports of Molefi's drinking habits from his military superiors and pronounced him fit to return to the BaKgatla chieftaincy.¹⁸⁹ He was reinstalled in September 1945. Even among the BaNgwato royal family, there were rumors that Seragola Seretse

¹⁸⁶BNA DCG 3/4, Gaborone District Commissioner, Annual Report for 1942.

¹⁸⁷R.F. Morton, "Defender of the Old Order: Mohumagadi Seingwaeng, 1883-1967," Paper submitted for workshop on biography, University of Botswana, (29 March 1985), 10-13. Permission of author granted June 1993.

¹⁸⁸Ibid.; Mr. Selogwe Pilane, "Interview Notes on BaKgatla History: R.F. Morton, 24 December 1981," Compiled and edited by R.F. Morton, Department of History, University of Botswana (1982), 50-51.

¹⁸⁹R.F. Morton, "Defender of the Old Order," 19.

was a "reluctant recruit".¹⁹⁰

In a somewhat different scenario, some of the men complained that SHE Bakwali of Tati district was protecting the royal family from going to war. The kgosi was pressured into appointing three young members of the royal house to join the AAPC.¹⁹¹ Men of royal lineage, who at first avoided war, were probably motivated by fears of losing important positions or influence within the village political structure. For example, Seragola Seretse (royal headman, house of Sekgoma) was Tshekedi's deputy at Serowe before the war, and obviously resented losing this important position to join the AAPC.¹⁹² Mokgosi Mokgosi, heir to the chieftainship of the Bamalete, was also prevented from joining the AAPC because of merafe concerns about succession. Kgosi Ikaneng consulted with Kgosi Tshekedi to have Mokgosi Mokgosi exempt from military service and undergo additional training for the chieftainship under Tshekedi's guidance.¹⁹³ Because of their efforts, the Resident Commissioner had Mokgosi Mokgosi released from training at Camp Lobatsi in April 1943.¹⁹⁴ He returned to Serowe, continued his training, and was installed as Kgosi in 1945. Sending a rival off to war for several years was also an effective way to manipulate merafe

¹⁹⁰BNA S 136/5, Letter from C.N.A. Clarke to Resident Commissioner, Mafeking, 23 January 1942. According to the record, as a result of a family discussion it was decided that the Royal House of Sekgoma must be represented in the AAPC. Three royal headmen were selected: Seragola Seretse, Rasebolai Kgamane and Barobi Kaelo.

¹⁹¹Some members of the royal house were strongly against the war. Two of Bakwali's sons went to war, Botseng Molapisi and Mbiganyi. Botseng was eventually promoted to Sergeant Major. James Poloko Gombani, Headman of Kgari, "The Life and Career of SHE Bakwali Kgosi Habangana IV of Mapoka Village 1930-1987: Interview by Teedzani Davies Thapelo, 13 July 1989," in University of Botswana Research Essay, May 1990.

¹⁹²Ibid. Seragola was promoted to Regimental Sergeant Major during the war and served honorably.

¹⁹³Mokgosi Mokgosi had been involved in some trouble at Tiger Kloof. He and several classmates led a riot and were subsequently released. Because of his actions, he was determined unfit for the Bamalete chieftainship. He was assigned as an interpreter in Serowe in hopes that he would mature and develop some maturity. DCG 4/3 Box No. 4, File on the chieftainship of the Bamalete.

¹⁹⁴Ibid.

politics during the war. Viewed in this context, royal resistance to military service is understandable.

Poorer men might resist for different reasons. Perhaps they could not afford to pay someone to watch their cattle while they were away.¹⁹⁵ If the man lacked clients, or sufficient relatives, or his family obligations were great, he might feel compelled to stay home. As mentioned earlier, fear was also a factor. One man from Tlokweng, who openly declared in kgotla that he was afraid of going to war, was fined £10 by the senior tribunal.¹⁹⁶ Mr. Nnonyane Babotsi, a subsistence farmer from Molepolole explained how he evaded Kgosi Kgari's men:

I was arrested twice, but still got away. We were hunted all over the Bakwena territory and only the boys were left, and when the need for manpower at the war became serious, we were no longer recruited in terms of regiments. Many were arrested at their cattleposts.¹⁹⁷

Such tactics as staying clear of recruiting agents or avoiding merafe obligations were not always successful. However, for the average person (non-royal), it remained the most effective way of resisting unacceptable demands.¹⁹⁸ Once recruited, however, another strategy, desertion remained.

Even after the men had attested, they sometimes sought escape. Some deserted a day or two after they had been attested, or if that was impossible, during the journey to Lobatsi. A number of recruits were lost because of camp congestion and the necessity of attesting men and leaving them in their villages until room was available in the camp. For example, Private Moleshwana Motsage, Ramoutsa Village, failed to proceed to Lobatsi with his company because he had disappeared during

¹⁹⁵According to Mrs. Dikeledi Mokibedi, women hired "masiapitse" (runaways) to plow for them, but they were cheated. Kweneng Historical Texts, 1979-80, Interviews by Brian Mokopagosi, University of Botswana Library.

¹⁹⁶BNA S 136/2, District Commissioner, Gaborone, to Government Secretary, Mafeking, 10 July 1941.

¹⁹⁷Kweneng Historical Texts, 1979-80. Interviews with Brian Mokopagosi, University of Botswana Library.

¹⁹⁸Ibid.

the night. Private Olephile Thebe reported himself ill to the medical officers and then was absent from training. The men who disappeared after taking the oath were subject to military law, and the police were notified to arrest them on sight.¹⁹⁹ They suffered heavy loss of pay, reduction in rank and detention if convicted of desertion.

The most overt instance of resistance was reported in Gabane, a village in Kweneng. According to the District Commissioner at Molepolole, four Gabane headmen had refused to supply recruits for the AAPC as ordered by Kgosi Sechele II. Then in November 1942, a certain mephato assaulted recruiting agents sent by the kgosi with weapons and stones.²⁰⁰ One man was injured in the fray (Raletsatsi, who was one of the assailants) and nineteen others were implicated in the stone-throwing. An investigation revealed that the Gabane men were mine workers and refugees from a neighboring Reserve. They refused to allow themselves to be compelled to join the AAPC, whatever the headman's views. In Gabane, the people resented the armed regiments rounding up their men and had decided to fight back.²⁰¹ Administrators, shocked at the overt display of disloyalty, ordered the offenders to obey BaKwena edicts. If the Gabane people refused, they were ejected from the Reserve. The headmen were charged with "disobeying a chief's order" and suspended from their duties.²⁰² Recruiting continued in Gabane but with poor results. Many of the men contracted for work in the mines.

Opposition to AAPC recruiting continued throughout the war. As the years passed, the families increasingly missed their relations. Those men who had fled to South Africa expressed their dissatisfaction

¹⁹⁹BNA DCG 3/2, Letter from Ellenberger to the O/C No. 3 Police District, Gaborone, 14 August 1941.

²⁰⁰"They all carried weapons and the MaLete were threatened with loaded guns". BNA S 137/3, Police report on Gabane disturbance, 12 December 1942.

²⁰¹Mositalgomo Ephraim Molatlhwe, Gabane, interview with Michael Taylor, National Museum Gaborone, transcript, February 1994.

²⁰²Headman Mosokwane was allowed to return to Gabane in May 1943 to resume his duties. BNA S 137/3, Government Secretary, Mafeking to D.C. Molepolole, 15 May 1943.

through African newspapers. BaTswana refugees accused their leaders of forcing people to go to a war. In the newspaper Inkululeko, Mokwena Sechele came under severe criticism:

people are being arrested in the veld and leaving only old men to plough who collapse at the plough. People plough for the Government and chiefs. Cattle sells at 6d per head and tax is £4.11.0 This policy of Bechuanaland is very severe.²⁰³

According to Kiyaga-Mulindwa, this anti-chief politicking was quite revolutionary in the Protectorate's political context and greatly disturbed the diKgosi. Tshekedi was particularly outspoken against the "subversive" elements in South Africa. Writing to the DC in Serowe, Tshekedi confided that

he had been horrified and amazed to discover during his visit to Cape Town the attitude towards the war taken up by the great majority of the African and Coloured population in the Union. He understood from a variety of reliable informants that they don't regard this as their war; since no Government could have their interest less at heart or adopt a more repressive policy than the Union Government.²⁰⁴

Newspaper articles in The Bantu World reflect a heated debate regarding the war and African participation between 1939-45. The fact that South Africa had a larger, literate, politicized African population did not escape the notice of Tshekedi. Dissension of this nature would have been unacceptable in the eyes of the administration and some diKgosi in Bechuanaland.

In conclusion, the complex nature of mobilizing a society for war is evident in the political, economic and social upheavals within Bechuanaland in the early years of the Second World War. Colonial administrators, the diKgosi, and many young men within the Protectorate were forced to adapt to new demands and expectations. Greater social

²⁰³BNA S 136/7, extract from Inkululeko/Freedom (published by the Communist Party of South Africa), attacking the war effort in Bechuanaland and Basutoland Protectorates as found in D. Kiyaga-Mulindwa, "The Bechuanaland Protectorate and the Second World War," JICH, XII, (3 May 1984), 52. Copies of this newspaper (1940-65) are available at Cape Town University Library and the State Library, Pretoria.

²⁰⁴Ibid., Government Secretary, Mafeking, to High Commissioner, Pretoria, 12 March 1942.

discipline and the regimentation of civilian lives created hierarchical relationships. Channels of social mobility were altered. Although the scale of mobilization does not compare to the total mobilization of men and materials in Europe, the process had similar cultural ramifications in that the experience had to be rationalized.²⁰⁵ Without getting bogged down in definitions of "rational" I mean the war had to be justified, a rough cost-benefit calculation about what was being defended had to be made, or what valued object could be achieved through participation. For some, the benefits were tied to aspirations of power, status and control; for others, the costs (measured in a variety of ways including the loss of political, economic and social freedoms) far outweighed the benefits. Thus, the war dramatically and fundamentally altered values and relationships between *social groups*. Also, mobilization was a reflection of the war's overall impact and the degree to which the war encroached upon and altered *individual* lives. In short, African life was disrupted, if not destroyed by the war.

Mobilization reflects many of the tensions within colonial Bechuanaland which have their origins in "British misrule" and previous conflicts. One trend is particularly evident, Great Britain only relied on its African colonies for military manpower when the exigencies of war demanded it. In other words, the major impetus for mobilization in Bechuanaland undoubtedly came from the pressures and demands arising out of the war, especially the end of 1941 when the war moved to North Africa and beyond. As in the past, the British failed to develop an independent, egalitarian policy towards African armed forces in the region because of political tensions with South Africa. Because of their limited vision, distrust and political paralysis, British

²⁰⁵Many levels of BaTswana were mobilized including labor, peasants and women. The mines were producing for the war effort, agricultural lands were utilized for the production of food crops for the army, and women in nearly every village knitted and sewed winter items for the soldiers.

political leaders offered only a limited military role to BaTswana soldiers.²⁰⁶ Despite their efforts to couch these limited opportunities in attractive ways, the BaTswana collectively viewed the war as another colonial burden.

²⁰⁶The British army allowed Ghanaian soldiers in World War II to apply for commissions and serve as armed combatants. See Adrienne M. Israel, "Measuring the War Experience: Ghanaian Soldiers in World War II" in The Journal of Modern African Studies, 25, 1, (1987), p. 163.

Chapter 5: The Nature of AAPC Military Service

Overview:

It has been said that once a man has been a soldier he can never quite be a civilian again.¹ For the individual, entering military service was momentous in itself, but it also had implications which went beyond merely answering the call of duty and service to the empire. While military organizations differ in important respects, the transformation from civilian life to army life have many characteristics in common. Because the African Auxiliary Pioneer Corps (HCT) was formed as a British unit, it shared many traditions and characteristics with other British army units, especially previous Pioneer Units.² For example, AAPC soldiers were subject to the same military codes of justice as other men in the British army. This is not to suggest that there was a common experience of war for all servicemen, since the sacrifices made by individuals were largely dependent on their conditions of service and the location where they served. For example, there was a difference between those who actually saw action and those who remained behind the lines. Because the BaTswana were "subjects" of the crown, there was a certain amount of paternalism regarding African servicemen by white officers and administrators. The fact that the men were "black soldiers" also affected their status, military roles and, in some cases, discipline.³ They were to share many of the same experiences as other soldiers during the war: training, travel, physical deprivations, monotonous work, loneliness and comradeship. There would be times of great fear, and times of impressive courage. Military service during World War II would be remembered because each

¹Willard W. Waller, The Veteran Comes Back (New York: The Dryden Press, Inc., 1944), 18.

²One of the first British military "Pioneer Units" consisting of colonials was the Indian Pioneer Corps formed in 1770. Sir George MacMunn, The History of the Sikh Pioneers (London: Sampson Low, Marston & Co., Ltd., 1936).

³For a historical overview of minorities in the military see Warren L. Young, Minorities and the Military, 1982

AAPC soldier had a stake in the success of the Allied military victory. And they won.

Perhaps more definitely than any other human social arrangement, army life is a socializing force. When a person becomes a soldier, he is subject to the conditioning processes of a peculiar environment, removed from the accustomed world that has made him what he is.⁴ In order to become a good soldier, an individual must shed some of his personal characteristics, especially individualism. Every soldier is indoctrinated into the military way of doing things: to take orders and to act in concert with thousands of others.⁵ As the first recruits of the newly formed AAPC were attested, they submitted themselves to a new authority through their oath. From then, each man was subject to British military discipline, required to forfeit personal will for the good of the whole unit. For the men from rural Bechuanaland, accustomed to small villages and towns, army life therefore required adjustments. There had always been a strong sense of community in Bechuanaland, but this was different.⁶ Now, every part of their life was regimented. The slower pace of rural life was replaced by the constant, rapid pace of fulfilling military tasks.⁷

⁴The masculine pronoun "he" for soldier is used metaphorically. All soldiers, both male and female, go through the same process.

⁵Marion Levy in his book Moderinization and the Structure of Societies, stated that in terms of armed forces to be effective, "it is necessary not only to isolate new members of the organization from the general civilian populace in order to teach them new skills and to integrate them with the members of the organization, but to some extent it is also necessary to keep them relatively isolated during their membership in order to keep their skills at the readiness...." (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), 594.

⁶An additional characteristic of military service from a political point of view is citizenship training. "Recruits with traditional backgrounds must learn about a new world in which they are identified with a larger political self. They learn that they stand in some definite relationship to a national community." L. Pye, "Armies in the Process of Political Modernization," J.J. Johnson, ed., The Role of the Military in Undeveloped Countries (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962), 82-83.

⁷Comments on military life are based on interviews with BaTswana veterans, as well as my own experiences in the military, spanning 15 years as a non-commissioned officer (NCO) of the United States Air Force, and as a commissioned officer.

And yet there were familiar aspects to army life. In writing about "military organizations" in the Handbook of Military Institutions, Janowitz stated that "military organization reflects the social structure and political and cultural values of each particular environment," and thus "because military formations are organized as national units, they reveal the consequences of historical and traditional values."⁸ Thus, military organization in Bechuanaland reflected both foreign and local societal patterns. Military authority followed rigidly established lines for everyone had a special place of his own, a rank, which placed him somewhere in the chain of command.⁹ "Orders come down from the top, all the way down, and they never went up".¹⁰ This was in some ways similar to merafe discipline, although perhaps more autocratic. Elders, headmen and the diKgosi had always demanded loyalty and obedience.¹¹ For those men who had worked on the mines, sergeants replaced "boss boys".¹² Socialization into a company was similar in many ways to being initiated into a mephato. The same virtues of loyalty, discipline, and competitiveness were important. There would be "secrets", traditions, badges for bravery, and songs to learn. Education and learning were as important in the army as they were to the morafe. Only the "initiated" would share in the special experiences of military life.

There were to be many such special experiences to be remembered:

⁸M. Janowitz, "Military Organization," in R.W. Little, ed., Handbook of Military Institutions, 13; idem, "Armed Forces and Society in World Perspective," in Transactions of the Sixth World Conference on Sociology (Evian, France: International Sociological Association, 1967), 148; idem, The Military in the Political Development of New Nations (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964); idem, The Professional Soldier, chapter 1.

⁹Social life in Bechuanaland was also ranked, i.e. wards were ranked according to their historical status and seniority of descent.

¹⁰W. Waller, The Veteran Comes Back, 21.

¹¹As noted earlier there were checks on absolute power. However, the king wielded great supernatural, economic and military power. Challenges to the authority of the ruler were taken with care. Thomas Tlou, "The Nature of Batswana States: Towards a Theory of Batswana Traditional Government," Botswana Notes and Records 6 (1974), 57-76.

¹²R.A.R. Bent, Ten Thousand Men, 8.

ocean travel, deserts more desolate than any in Botswana, mountains, extreme heat and cold, and the first sight of snow. There were new peoples to meet and work with; new languages to learn; exciting foreign places to visit such as Egypt, the holy places in the Middle East, and Rome. Most interviewed ex-servicemen remember the war as a pivotal experience in their lives: having left the isolation of their towns and villages they had travelled outside southern Africa for the first time. And then there were the strains of the war itself which included worries about friends and relatives in the forces and back home. At every turn, the men were faced with new technologies, new horrors and an unbelievable amount of death and injury.¹³ This, perhaps, was the hardest challenge of all. In sharing hardship and danger, the soldiers relied on each other for survival and pooled their resources to get them through day-to-day experiences. As a result, a strong sense of "corporateness" developed among BaTswana soldiers.

Many strategies were employed by army officials to make the risk of death and the hard work easier to bear. British military policy dictated that it was the responsibility of all commanders¹⁴ to look after the welfare and morale of their African soldiers, for it was recognized that a decline in morale could result in a serious breakdown of military discipline and the will to fight.¹⁵ Within AAPC units, the first

¹³The military, being of necessity technically oriented, is thus also oriented toward modernization and development. E. Shils, "The Military in the Political Development of the New States," also in J.J. Johnson, ed., The Role of the Military, 32-33.

¹⁴Commanders of BaTswana military units were exclusively white males recruited from the Protectorate, South Africa and Great Britain. Some had served in the Protectorate before the war and new BaTswana customs and culture. Others had little or no experience working with African soldiers.

¹⁵William E. Hocking (WWI veteran) thought the study of morale so important he presented lectures and wrote a book, Morale and its Enemies (London: Oxford University Press, 1918) on the subject after the war. He wrote, "good morale is the condition of the inner man: it is the state of will in which you can get most from the machinery, deliver the blows with the greatest effort, take blows with the least expression, and hold out for the longest time. It is both fighting-power and staying-power and strength to resist the mental infections which fear, discouragement, and fatigue bring with them," see 14-23.

obligation of commanders was for the physical well-being of each soldier.¹⁶ Military inspectors toured military installations, noting overall camp conditions, supply levels, and logistical problems. Secondly, training and work conditions were scrutinized, especially relationships between noncommissioned officers¹⁷ (NCOs) and their men. Thirdly, the quality of rest and leisure activities were examined closely. All of these factors were important to the maintenance of a well-functioning Bechuanaland force. Despite the conscientious efforts to maintain military efficiency, there was an insidious wearing down of morale as the war dragged on. No one envisioned that the AAPC would be deployed overseas for over four years. The soldiers grew more resentful of unequal pay, suppressed ambitions, and racially motivated policies. By 1945 there were signs of discontent among the AAPC, and military offenses multiplied. The "military spirit" had decayed; morale was in serious jeopardy. The military-socialization process was affected by changing expectations of the future.¹⁸ With little hope for a quick return to their homes, the soldiers began to resent the slavish submission to British authority required of them by white commanders.

I. Incorporation into Military Life

The official history of the Bechuanaland Auxiliary Pioneer Corps was written in 1952 by Major R.A.R. Bent, who served with the

¹⁶Unit inspection reports always focused on three major areas of concern: a) physical conditions; b) training; and c) health, recreation and welfare. If any of these primary areas were deficient, commanders were instructed to correct the problems. PRO DO35 1183/Y1069/1/1, AAPC Unit Inspection Reports.

¹⁷Non-commissioned officers (NCOs) were also mainly whites, however, a few educated Africans were given this rank as well. The process of identifying and training African NCOs will be discussed in the chapter.

¹⁸The extent of military socialization depends upon in some degree how the individual involved has developed "positive" relationships (and the maintenance of those relationships over time) within the institutional framework. It is also affected by expectations of the future. K. Lang, "Military Organization," in J.G. March, ed., Handbook of Social Organizations (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1964), 848ff.

Bechuanaland Pioneers in several capacities throughout the war.¹⁹

Because this is a standard military history, fairly detailed in its treatment of individual companies and campaigns, I will not attempt to repeat the official version of the war, although drawing from it for information. I have decided to take a broader perspective: focusing on the AAPC as a group through a thematic discussion of important social issues surrounding military life. Generalizations presented in the rest of this study will be supported by specific examples taken from a wide variety of historical sources, as indicated in the footnotes.

The transformation from civilian to professional soldier began with an abrupt change from the familiar surroundings of home to the main training facility. As soon as the men were attested (oath of service) in their merafe centers by the District Commissioners, they were issued rations²⁰ and sent by train to Camp Lobatsi located south of present-day Gaborone.²¹ Lobatsi had been chosen by the 203 British Military Mission (MilMiss)²² as the site of the new military camp because of its facilities--cold storage buildings, excellent supply of water, telegraph, hospital, and other buildings for store-rooms. There was also a railway siding nearby which allowed the transport of men, stores and equipment to and from the camp.²³ Construction of kitchens and cook-houses, canteens, the armory, offices, stores and messes for the British

¹⁹Bent was an AAPC company commander for several years, and was later elevated to a staff officer position which dealt exclusively with HCT soldiers. In 1952, Bent was a District Commissioner in the Bechuanaland Protectorate. The official history is titled, Ten Thousand Men of Africa: The Story of the Bechuanaland Pioneers and Gunners, 1941-1946 (Bechuanaland Government: HMS Press, 1952).

²⁰Typical rations included 1 1/2 lbs mealie meal, 1/2 oz salt, 2 ozs dried beans, 1/2 lb fresh meat and 1 oz fat for the trip. BNA DCG 3/2, DC Ellenberger, note in file, 1 Aug 1941.

²¹Some of the men had to wait until there were sufficient uniforms and supplies at Lobatsi. While the men waited in their districts, they were attested, fed, paid and trained by officers and NCOs sent from Lobatsi. BNA S 136/4, Memorandum on the Bechuanaland Protectorate Group of the AAPC.

²²203 British Military Mission represented the British Army in Pretoria.

²³BNA S 135/6, Camp Lobatsi, Letter from C.N.A. Clarke to Mr. Dawson, 9 June 1941.

officers and NCOs, sewage system, and latrines were accomplished by the first BaTswana recruits under the supervision of the Director of Public Works.²⁴ The government spent about £12,500 on the construction project, which included the expansion of the hospital.²⁵ It was estimated that Camp Lobatsi could train 2,500 men once it was in full operation.²⁶ Before whole companies arrived at Lobatsi, recruits from each merafe were selected for preliminary training to assist with the arrival of the others. Selected men were recommended for NCO rank by the District Commissioner or later by Officers Commanding (O/C) at the training camp.²⁷ The first basic trainees reported to Lobatsi during July 1941, coming in batches of company strength about 350 strong; at the end of the month there were two thousand BaTswana in training.²⁸ Upon arrival at the camp, the men were assigned to a company (Coy), generally composed of men from their own merafe. Because there was almost no "national identity" and merafe traditions and customs were strong, it was decided by the Resident Commissioner and the diKgosi that the men would remain in separate companies according to their region of origin.²⁹ Company officers were supplied by drafts from the Pioneer Corps in the UK supplemented by the very few Europeans available locally

²⁴The first recruits were BaNgwaketse. Kgosi Bathoen sent 156 men to Lobatsi on 23 June 1941. BNA DCG 3/2, Note by Resident Commissioner, June 1941; BNA S 137/1/2, Minutes of the 31st Session of the European Advisory Council, 9-13 March 1942.

²⁵D. Kiyaga-Mulindwa, "Bechuanaland Protectorate and WWII," 37.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷BNA DCG 3/2, Report by Resident Commissioner on AAPC, 22 August 1941. The O.C. at Lobatsi wanted 12 men per Coy to be identified as suitable for promotion to NCO rank and sent in advance to Lobatsi to receive preliminary training to enable them to assist in the handling the bulk of the Coy recruits on arrival. The main qualification was some knowledge of English.

²⁸R.A.R. Bent, Ten Thousand Men, 6.

²⁹BNA DCG 3/2, Minutes of Conference Presided Over by His Honour the Resident Commissioner, 20 June 1941. Colonel C.N.A. Clarke further explains, "To utilise to the full the morale and disciplinary value of tribal cohesion and in deference to tribal desires all Bechuana units were organized and reinforced on a tribal basis-a policy which while sometimes making the finding of suitable reinforcements difficult, was justified on morale and disciplinary grounds." See PRO DO35 1183/Y1069/1/1, Staff Study: Bechuana as Soldiers in CMF, 14 October 1945.

in the Bechuanaland Protectorate. The 24 Companies and their merafe are listed below:³⁰

Company	<u>Merafe</u>	Strength
1971	BaNgwaketse	357
1972	BaNgwato	355
1973	BaKwena	356
1974	BaKgatla	356
1975	BaNgwaketse & BaRolong	358
1976	BaNgwato	356
1978	BaTawana	368
1979	BaNgwato	346
1980	BaKwena	375
1981	BaNgwato	376
1982	BaNgwato	377
1983	BaNgwaketse	376
1984	BaKwena & others	358
1985	BaNgwato	377
1986	BaNgwato	366
1987	BaKgatla	367
1988	BaRolong, BaKgatla & northern groups	353
1989	BaNgwato	376
1990	BaNgwato	374
1970	BaNgwaketse	376
1969	BaKwena & BaNgwaketse	374
1968	BaNgwato	377
1967	BaNgwato	375
1966	BaNgwato	375

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As can be seen, because of manpower shortages in some districts, certain Coys were not made up of a single merafe. Other companies also had men assigned to them at Lobatsi on an ad hoc basis. However, in general the principle of keeping men from the same region together was adhered to. In fact, there was some concern on the part of officials and the diKqosi regarding mixed companies:

I have to inform you that Mr. Germond was sent to Ramoutsa by the O/C Depot, to discuss the amalgamation of the BaMaLete and BaNgwaketse with me and with acting chief Ketshwerebothata. Mr. Germond informed the chief that there had been no vestige of friction at Lobatsi between the men of the two tribes and that in fact NCOs of the BaMaLete are drilling BaNgwaketse details.³¹

³⁰BNA S 136/7, Secret Memorandum on Troop Strength, 1943. Statistics kept by Records Division in Durban. Reinforcements: 204 additional men between 1941-5. Discharges, desertions, etc.: 615. Note: 1977 Coy was Bamangwato but no exact figures were given. One source lists their numbers as 6719-8181.

³¹BNA DCG 3/2, Letter from Ellenberger to Gov't Secretary, Mafeking, dated 22 September 1941, regarding friction between tribes.

Old conflicts and rivalries among the BaTswana merafe were generally set aside during training and were not a factor in discipline among the Coys at Lobatsi.³² Ramonaka Semele, of 1974 Coy, explains why:

Peoples are different, some don't always get along. I don't remember the local tribes not obeying orders or any trouble between companies during the war. The chiefs mobilized each company so they were separate. As soldiers, we all went as children, and we got along well, played well, regardless of separateness.³³

As in other militaries around the globe, each soldier was assigned a permanent identification number.³⁴ In Bechuanaland, regimental numbers were assigned to different merafe. This practice made it easy for administrators and commanders to identify where the men came from. It also facilitated pay matters and the delivery of mail. The allocation of regimental numbers were³⁵:

BaNgwaketse	B.P.	1	-	999
BaKwena		1000	-	1999
BaKgatl		2000	-	2999
BaTlokwa		3000	-	3999
BaRolong		4000	-	4999
Francistown		5000	-	5999
BaNgwato		6000	-	10000

In August 1941, additional numbers were assigned when the quota was raised to 15+ Coys instead of the original 6-7 Coys:

BaNgwaketse	10,000	-	10,999
BaKwena	11,000	-	11,999
BaTawana	12,000	-	12,999

Receiving an identification number and being assigned to a company was a key part of the initial socializing process. An individual was no

³²There were no references either in the Botswana National Archives or at the PRO in London which hinted at any serious problems regarding inter-merafe relationships. Problems between other HCT units were more likely and will be discussed later in the paper.

³³Ramonaka Semele, 1974 Company, interview by author, Odi, 19 July 1994. During my oral interviews, questions were posed to veterans on military discipline and they do not remember inter-Coy squabbles as a factor of army life. Commanders probably squelched any problems before they escalated into major incidents.

³⁴All administrative functions of an army are done "by the numbers". A soldier will rarely be identified within the system by name. Willard Waller, The Veteran Comes Back, 20-21.

³⁵BNA DCG 3/2, African Auxiliary Pioneer Corps, Enlistment of Africans, 20 June 1941.

longer called by his name, but a number within the military system.³⁶

Each man was now, in theory at least, equal to the next.

Accommodations at Lobatsi were somewhat makeshift. The recruits were housed in canvas tents set about in orderly fashion. Blankets and bed boards were issued along with an assigned place to sleep. Each unit was provided with rations and a cooking area with a stove to prepare their meals. Company latrines consisted of long rows of holes, with 20 seats built above, and blankets hung for privacy.³⁷ For those accustomed to the communal living arrangements in mine compounds, their new surroundings were not very different.

The next step in the socialization process was to have everyone look alike.³⁸ African NCOs helped with the dispersement of essential kit items and uniforms, which initially were in short supply, so that some of the men began training in their civilian clothes.³⁹ According to Major Bent, this created quite a sight on the parade ground:

There was the greatest variety in the appearance of the recruits. There were blazers, pajama jackets, striped suiting, shirts of every known type with bright blue, yellow and green pockets and patches sewn on them. Bowler hats and mine helmets were worn, and little knitted skull caps, white, blue, black, and pink.⁴⁰

As uniform supplies reached Lobatsi from the Union of South Africa, the men were required to bundle up their civilian clothes to be sent home.⁴¹

Private Abel, E.C. 8156, described the process in a rare letter to Kqosi

³⁶At the age of 70+, nearly all WWII veterans still remember their identification number and company number without looking at their discharge papers.

³⁷See photos of AAPC camp facilities in PRO DO 119/1149. It is interesting to note that officer latrines were private rooms.

³⁸The depersonalizing of the recruit is the first step in forming a cohesive military unit. Some equal it to the ritual "shedding" of everything connected to the civilian world when entering a religious order.

³⁹BNA DCG 3/2, Minutes, Resident Commissioner's Conference, 20 June 1941.

⁴⁰R. Bent, Ten Thousand Men, 6.

⁴¹"A Native's First Day at the Reception Depot," Bantu World, 8 August 1942, 4. "[Recruits] can't wait, for as soon as his kit is checked, he grabs his bag and with little ceremony discards his tattered clothes, much to the amusement of his onlookers and gets or endeavors to get dressed."

Tshekedi Khama (BaNgwato):

I have consigned to your office all the kit that belongs to men that comprise the 1981 Coy. We have as far as possible made the men of one village pack all their blankets into one luggage. It is our humble wish that these are distributed amongst our relatives on their arrival at Serowe. The men are getting into soldier form and begin to do things orderly.⁴²

The new AAPC uniform which Private Abel was issued consisted of khaki green drill shorts and dark puttees, anklets, army issue underwear, a belt, and either a bush shirt or an ordinary one, all set off with a handsome bush-hat and sturdy brown boots.⁴³ As part of their training, each soldier learned to "spit and polish" his boots until they gleamed. Major Rhodes-Wood, describes in his official history of the Royal Pioneer Corps, the men's reactions to the uniform:

No trained soldier of any nation, however long his service, could fail to appreciate the smart turn-out of the African recruit after a few weeks training when...he paraded ceremoniously in his spotless uniform with blanched webbing and shining boots.⁴⁴

Once the men were outfitted and assigned to a unit, training began. Basic military training at Lobatsi was only four weeks long.⁴⁵ Recruits practiced saluting, marching (turning, wheeling, forming and falling in and out), guard drill, and sentry drill. African NCOs orchestrated the complex movements of the platoons and squadrons, and drilled them until they moved in concert.⁴⁶ They were taught what to do,

⁴²Private S. Abel, E.C. 8156, Letter to Tshekedi Khama from Lobatsi, 30 October, 1941, Michael Crowder Papers, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, London. Note: Over two hundred letters written by AAPC soldiers in this collection were translated into English under Crowder's direction. Accuracy of translations has not been independently verified. See Appendix.

⁴³R.A.R. Bent, Ten Thousand Men, 6. Most of the recruits showed up for training barefooted or shod in sandals made of hide. See E.H. Rhodes-Wood, A War History of the Royal Pioneer Corps, 1939-1945 (Aldershot: Gale & Polden Ltd., 1960), 118.

⁴⁴E.H. Rhodes-Wood, A War History of the Royal Pioneer Corps, 129. This official history of the Royal Pioneer Corps, compiled from War Office documents, includes quite a bit of material on Pioneers from all over the empire, including the HCT.

⁴⁵Basic military training in the U.S. was about 3 months. W. Waller, The Veteran Comes Back, 22.

⁴⁶Mafeking Mail, 20 June 1942, 5. Photo of military honor guard on parade ground.

how they were to behave towards their fellowmen and towards their superiors. Officers explained their pay and how to go about receiving it; how to write letters and how to have them addressed. Long route marches prepared the men physically and mentally for the challenges of a war-time environment. The soldiers learned the art of concealment, and how to take cover from enemy aircraft.⁴⁷

To prepare them further, the new recruits were authorized a certain amount of arms training. Although they were not to be combatants, they had to learn how to defend themselves properly in case of attack. However, according to official reports the rifle training at Lobatsi was rudimentary at best. The weapons available for training were old and outdated.⁴⁸ Additionally, there were not enough guns available in the Protectorate to issue all the recruits a personal training weapon. The camp officials tried to alleviate the problem by borrowing rifles from the police station at Lobatsi.⁴⁹ When word reached the merafe that rifles were in short supply, old worn-out weapons were collected in the districts and sent to the camp.⁵⁰ Despite these handicaps, the men were taught the important aspects of rifle construction, operation, and cleaning. They were to get advanced weapons training later.

In addition to standard military training, there were other requirements to be met. In preparation for going overseas, the men were inoculated against the most threatening diseases (cholera, smallpox, and

⁴⁷Modise Thebe, E.C. 1492, age 74, still remembers his original military training and demonstrated the art of combat techniques such as crouch and fire at his residence in Kumankwane, 8 July 1994.

⁴⁸The British army used the Lee-Enfield rifle which was equipped with a breech loading magazine of the bolt type. It weighed 8 3/4 lbs. and fired 5 rounds per minute (normal); 15 rounds per minute (rapid). The British Army in WWII (London: Greenhill Books, 1990), 129-130.

⁴⁹BNA DCG 3/2, Confidential Circular Memorandum to all DCs dated 8 July 1941. Only 20 rifles could be spared by the police for training at Lobatsi.

⁵⁰R.A.R. Bent, Ten Thousand Men, 7.

yellow fever).⁵¹ Malaria was also a major medical concern and prophylaxes were administered. The men attended classes on military subjects, including military law. The camp medical officers lectured on hygiene and the prevention of venereal disease.⁵² With classes, drill and physical training, there was little time for recreation. There were church services held on Sundays with free-time afterwards.⁵³ Wives from Gaberones village visited their husbands while they were in training.⁵⁴

Discipline at camp Lobatsi was generally very good according to Private Abel, who wrote about the men in 1981 Company:

Recently, a number of European Officers and NCOs have been posted to our company. Our men receive good instruction in military training. They seem to be happy about camp life and eager to learn all that is taught. Most of them are in good health and appear smart in khaki. The men are eager to embark for Egypt.

We are on initial lesson on squad and section drill...I am getting used to the work and quite happy with the work. There is much pleasant and unpleasant matters to be experienced.⁵⁵

However, there is some evidence that not everyone adapted to military life without some resistance. Administrative reports sent to the Resident Commissioner, and in turn to the District Commissioners, refer to men disappearing from the camp without being on leave (military terms A.W.O.L.).⁵⁶ Some of the men were only gone a few hours; others for

⁵¹BNA S 137/1/3, Letter from Forsyth Thompson to Nettelton at Serowe, April 1942.

⁵²Since V.D. was a serious problem among the men, special lectures were given on the use of prophylaxis and condoms. Routine "short arm" inspections for V.D. were held and treatment rooms were set up. BNA S 136/5, Medical Officer Report, Camp Lobatsi, 17 November 1941.

⁵³Reverend Kgasa was the LMS chaplain who administered to the men at Lobatsi. Veteran and LMS chaplain Robert Kgasa, interview by author, Kanye, 7 July 1994. Robert is the son of the elder Kgasa which worked at Lobatsi.

⁵⁴BNA DCG 3/3, Letter from Ellenberger to the Officer Commanding Depot, Pioneer Corps, Lobatsi, dated 14 November 1941. They were allowed in camp between parades and before sunset. The men were not allowed outside the camp for conjugal sexual intercourse, i.e. for the prevention of V.D. and maintenance of military discipline. BNA S 136/5, Medical Officer Report, Camp Lobatsi, 17 November 1941.

⁵⁵Abel Sikunyana, E.C. 8156, Letters to Tshekedi Khama from Lobatsi, 25 October & 20 November 1941, Michael Crowder Files, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, London.

⁵⁶General punishment for A.W.O.L. was loss of pay or reduction in rank.

days. Additionally, there seemed to be a rash of leave requests in December 1941. The District Commissioner at Serowe approached Tshekedi Khama about the requests. It seemed some of the men wanted leave on the grounds of illness and death of their relatives.⁵⁷ Tshekedi replied that, "it is against tribal etiquette [to grant leave] where men have been called out to perform a duty similar to that for which the Pioneer Corps has been called out."⁵⁸ Subsequently, leave was not granted by the military authorities.

Military commanders at Camp Lobatsi meted out swift disciplinary action against new trainees who ignored or disobeyed military regulations. As the following quote signifies, resistance occasionally manifested itself in violence against superior officers:

Privates Tswidi, Pule, Goratwang and Tshenyege from Molepolole forfeited pay for being A.W.O.L. Lance Corporal Mophiri from 1975 Coy was reduced in rank to Private, deprived of 9 days pay, and awarded 9 days detention for being A.W.O.L. and "striking his superior officer in the line of duty". Private Waletshole, of the same Coy., also was awarded 168 hours detention for being A.W.O.L. and "striking his superior officer in the execution of his duty".⁵⁹

Between July 1941 and November 1943, forty-three men had been charged with desertion by military authorities.⁶⁰ Incidents such as these are not uncommon among training camps where thousands of men are under great stress. It should also be remembered that not everyone was a "volunteer". Resentment over being forced to enlist in the AAPC was strong among some of the men. Volunteers may have realized that they were "unsuited" for military life and tried to escape. According to veteran Seboni, while the army taught him many valuable lessons, "there was a great deal of brainwashing in the army. It was a white man's war

⁵⁷Tshekedi Khama, Letter to DC at Serowe regarding the granting of leave, 6 December 1941, Michael Crowder Files, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, London.

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹BNA DCG 3/2, Report from Camp Lobatsi, September 1941.

⁶⁰BNA S 136/7, Letter from Bechuanaland Depot, Lobatsi to Mr. Lawrenson, dated 4 December 1943. The letter listed twenty-eight additional men as "absconded recruits".

which the BaTswana were forced to participate in against their will".⁶¹ As in all military establishments, disobedience was not tolerated within the Pioneer Corps and infractions were expeditiously punished.⁶²

Anyone who has survived the experience of basic military training, knows that in a few short weeks recruits are transformed, willing or not, into members of the military profession. The training is full-time, requiring total immersion and obedience. At times the intellectual, physical, and emotional challenges each recruit faced seems pointlessly rigorous. However, once each soldier reached his first assignment, the mission would require high standards of fitness, discipline, and readiness. African soldiers were expected to acquire military virtues and ideals, especially commitment to duty. The newly indoctrinated soldiers from Bechuanaland would soon have an opportunity to prove their worth as members of the British Pioneer Corps.

The first four companies to finish training at Lobatsi were 1971, 1972, 1973 and 1974 Coys.⁶³ After a short wait for information on shipping arrangements, they boarded a train for Durban in September, only two months after their arrival at the training camp.⁶⁴ Major Bent describes their departure:

⁶¹B.R.T. Seboni enlisted in the APC and performed garrison duties in Egypt from 1946-1949. His brother O.J. Seboni served during the war. Interview by author, Molepolole, 14 July 1994.

⁶²When approval had been granted for the formation of the AAPC as a Corps of the United Kingdom Army, they were immediately held accountable to the provisions of the British Army Act as it pertains to military discipline. BNA S 136/6, Question of Recruiting and Training for Service with Imperial Forces.

⁶³Within six months, fifteen Coys had been recruited. The fifteenth company departed Lobatsi on 19 January 1942. Until a second recruitment campaign began in mid-1942, Camp Lobatsi was nearly deserted. BNA S 136/6, Letter from Clarke to Lord Harlech, 1 April 1942.

⁶⁴There was a shortage of troopships going to the Middle East. Soldiers from the U.K. were sent via the Cape to the Middle East too. Complications regarding the convoys were a main concern for the War Office. "To decide what personnel should be embarked when there was never enough room for all; to organize their movement to the ports and their embarkation; and finally to get the convoy and its escorts out to sea, involved the cooperation of a multitude of authorities." Gerry R. Rubin, Durban 1942: A British Troopship Revolt (London: The Hambledon Press, 1992), 270-271.

The four companies ... left Lobatsi by train, and they were cheered on their way by the whole community of the little town, which had become cradle of the Bechuanaland forces. All were there, traders, hotel-keepers, ranchers, cattle dealers, Government officials and Bechuana from the nearby villages and locations, hardly believing that the recruitment and training of the men was ever going to result in this. Not many days later 1975, 1976 and then 1977 left.⁶⁵

The train ride to Durban was uneventful, and most of the men used the time to catch up on their sleep. The respite had been relaxing but too short. Once the men reached the train station, they formed up and marched to the harbor "loaded down with kitbags on their shoulders and haversacks on their back."⁶⁶ Durban harbor was bustling with activity: bands played, vendors hawked refreshments and souvenirs, and friends and relatives waved good-bye to loved ones. Soldiers from the Native Military Corps, other AAPC units (Swazi and Basuto), and Union Defense Forces (UDF) all converged on Durban to await transportation to the theaters of war.⁶⁷ There were interested observers, too.⁶⁸ According to Bent, the BaTswana men were very excited--as most had never seen a ship or the sea before.⁶⁹ Taulo Mafoko, formerly of 1978 Coy, recalls, "After Lobatsi, we got on a ship, and there was lots of water. We were glad to see so much."⁷⁰

The Pioneers boarded their assigned ship waiting in the harbor. It is hard to make generalizations about conditions on board the military transport ships. Some of the ships were commandeered luxury vessels with many amenities; others were simple haulers with the minimum of comforts and cramped living quarters. Whatever was available, was what the men boarded. Two different accounts describe the wide range of

⁶⁵R.A.R. Bent, Ten Thousand Men, 9.

⁶⁶"March to the Station," Bantu World, 7 March 1941, 4.

⁶⁷If there was a delay at Durban, the men might have visited any one of the many clubs and canteens for servicemen. The color-bar was somewhat relaxed in Durban during the war, although there were supposed to be separate social and welfare facilities based on color. Gerry Rubin, Durban 1942, 28; 132.

⁶⁸Ibid., 20; 70. Approximately 90,000 Indians lived in Durban in 1942. Chinese and Burmese servicemen also boarded ships at Durban.

⁶⁹R.A.R. Bent, Ten Thousand Men, 10.

⁷⁰Interview by Barry Morton, Etsha, Note 21, 18 February 1994.

facilities:

It has been remembered that the living conditions on the City of Canterbury were extremely uncomfortable, indeed unpleasant, in warm climes. Sleeping accommodation for the troops was below deck in the hold usually used for carrying cargo. All the floor space was covered by mattresses, and hammocks were slung across the hold. In this demanding, unventilated environment, to which the troops were unaccustomed, complaints about overcrowding, poor food and inadequate drinking water were quickly voiced.⁷¹

Our "hotel" on the ocean contained a lounge, sitting and dining rooms. In fact the ship lacked nothing. What it did not have was not worth having. In itself was a little town for it had all the amenities found in any town or city. Shops, Butchery, Bakery, Chemist, Bar, Hospital and even facilities for sports like cricket, deck quoit and table tennis.⁷²

Initially, the men spent their time getting used to the pitch and roll of a ship on the high seas. As with most new sailors, the BaTswana suffered sea-sickness for the first few days of the voyage.⁷³ Everyone had duties to perform while on board such as boat drill, polishing the decks, guard duty, and kitchen fatigues.⁷⁴ However, there was plenty of time for other amusements. In order to reduce the monotony of the long voyage, some of the soldiers held singing and dancing contests.⁷⁵ Others relaxed, gazed at the sea--watching for flying fish and porpoises, read newspapers or took classes in English. There were usually stops for food, fuel or more troops embarking at Mombasa and Aden. "Some of the first Bechuana companies put in Mombasa and went ashore for a route march; others took their route march round the bare hot mountains of Aden," wrote Bent.⁷⁶ Once they had passed through the

⁷¹Gerry Rubin, Durban 1942, 12.

⁷²Private Arthur Augus, "First Non-European Nursing Contingent Arrives in Egypt," Bantu World, 7 March 1942, 4. Obviously, not everyone was as fortunate as Private Augus, but because of the exigencies of war, Africans were experiencing new opportunities normally denied to them because of the color bar in Southern Africa.

⁷³"African Soldiers On Their Way to Western Desert," Bantu World, 4 October 1941, 4; BNA DCS 30/1, Major Campbell, 1986 Coy, Letter on Voyage, dated 15 December 1941.

⁷⁴R.A.R. Bent, Ten Thousand Men, 11.

⁷⁵"African Soldiers on Their Way to Western Desert," Bantu World, 4 October 1941, 4; BNA DCS 30/1, Letter from Major Campbell, 1986 Coy, 15 December 1941. Major Campbell noted in his letter that the men of 1986 Coy had received a remarkable reception at their concert on board ship.

⁷⁶Ibid.

Red Sea, the halcyon days of sea travel were nearly over.⁷⁷ The men of the AAPC would join thousands of other labor corps units stationed in the Middle East.

II. Organization of British Pioneer Corps and the Depot at Qasassin⁷⁸

Once the AAPC companies arrived at their destination, they became part of a much larger war-time organization composed of the British Auxiliary Military Pioneer Corps and non-British companies from around the globe.⁷⁹ In order to understand where the men from Bechuanaland fitted within the broad framework of the British army, it is necessary to review the basics of the military command structure as it pertained to labor.

At the declaration of war, the British Army consisted of the Regular Army, the Territorial Army (corresponding to the National Guard in the United States), and several reserve forces.⁸⁰ In addition to the Home Forces, there were Overseas Commands. Of these Overseas Commands, two are important for my topic: the British Forces in the Middle East (G.H.Q./M.E.F.) created in 1941; and, the British Forces in the Central Mediterranean (C.M.F.) created through the amalgamation of units of the First and Eighth Armies in 1943. These commands were under the direction of the British War Office, from which all plans and policy regarding the war emanated.

As mentioned in earlier chapters, the British were somewhat unprepared for war in September 1939. This was especially true

⁷⁷The trip from Durban to Aden took approximately 21 days. From Aden it took another four days to reach Suez. Interview with Kgosi B.R. Baletloa, E.C. 10035, by author, at Gaborone West, 13 July 1994.

⁷⁸Qasassin is sometimes spelled "Quassasin" in the literature. It was located in the Sweet Water Canal area of the Canal Zone and opened on 1 June 1941.

⁷⁹In 1945, The Corps was the largest international force to serve under one regimental badge in the annals of British military history. E.H. Rhodes-Wood, A War History of the Royal Pioneer Corps, 21.

⁸⁰The British Army in WWII: A Handbook on the Organisation, Armament, Equipment, Ranks, Uniforms, etc. 1942, intro. by Brian L. Davis (London: Greenhill Books, 1990 edition), 10.

regarding the state of military labor.⁸¹ As an Expeditionary Force was formed and made ready to sail for France, it was quickly realized by British military officials that a "Labour Directorate" was needed to support such a large undertaking.⁸² This was formed on 2 September 1939, under the command of Colonel E.A. Cox-Field. Companies were originally composed of British reservists and men transferred from other British infantry units. These first labor units were allocated to key areas such as the docks, railways and ordnance depots in Britain, and shortly thereafter in France.⁸³

In 1940, a new branch was created at the War Office which was to administer military labor. Under the direction of Colonel J.V.R. Jackson, the designation "Labour" was discarded and the new label of "Auxiliary Military Pioneer Corps" (A.M.P.C.) was affixed.⁸⁴ Labor requirements were coordinated with every branch of service (Army, Navy and Air Force) and with allied forces in the field. Pioneer companies were "loaned out" to other organizations, which created great competition for labor services.⁸⁵ It also proved to be an administrative nightmare for the new Directorate.

As is to be expected with any new military organization, there were many problems to be ironed out: manpower, training, transport, and welfare to name a few. The men of the Pioneer Corps were considered

⁸¹After the First World War when the demand for economy came, labor or "Pioneer" units were the first to be deactivated. G. MacMunn, History of Sikh Pioneers, 515.

⁸²The last British Labor Corps had been disbanded after the First World War. The Sikh Pioneers in India were disbanded in 1932. E.H. Rhodes-Wood, A War History of the Royal Pioneer Corps, intro; G. MacMunn, The History of the Sikh Pioneers.

⁸³E.H. Rhodes-Wood, A War History of the Royal Pioneer Corps, 6.

⁸⁴Ibid.

⁸⁵Ibid., 25. "Pioneers always worked in conjunction with another of the Services and these latter from the outset had acquired the designation of the "employing service." The atmosphere created by the implication of "employer" and "employee" was inevitable--the latter was inferior to the former."

"inferiors" by other British regiments.⁸⁶ Many of the units were composed of rejects, unstable or mentally deficient men, or criminals discarded by other British regiments.⁸⁷ Disciplinary problems abounded. Despite these rocky beginnings, the Corps gained a reputation for hard work under the most severe conditions. The organization continued to expand as labor requirements in Europe skyrocketed, however, there were never enough men.⁸⁸

In 1940 the War Office authorized the formation of non-British companies. Higher authority had by now realized the extent by which it had under-estimated labor manpower requirements and had come to an appreciation of the fact that the civilian labor on which it had counted in pre-war planning would not be forthcoming, so that it was imperative to tap other resources of supply.⁸⁹ Spaniards, Germans, Italians, Austrians, Czechs, Poles, and others filled the ranks of the non-British Pioneer companies operating throughout Europe.⁹⁰ As new campaigns opened in eastern Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East, manpower shortages continued to plague the Director of Labor.

In 1940, the Directorate of Labour (Middle East) was formed. The Pioneers working in this theater were mainly Palestinians (armed) and Cypriots (unarmed).⁹¹ To their ranks were added in October 1941: Basutos (57 & 63 Group), Bechuanas (64 Group), and Swazis (54 Group). These men were under the command of LtCol F.A. Owen-Lewis, who had been recalled from the Sudan to recruit and form the new HCT Pioneer units.

⁸⁶Historically, labor units were never prestigious within the British military structure. The Indian Army used men of the lowest castes in Pioneer Regiments. G. MacMunn, History of the Sikh Pioneers, 17; 262 and Charles C. Trench, The Indian Army (GDR: Thames and Hudson, 1988), 29.

⁸⁷Rhodes-Wood, A War History of the Royal Pioneer Corps, 84-85.

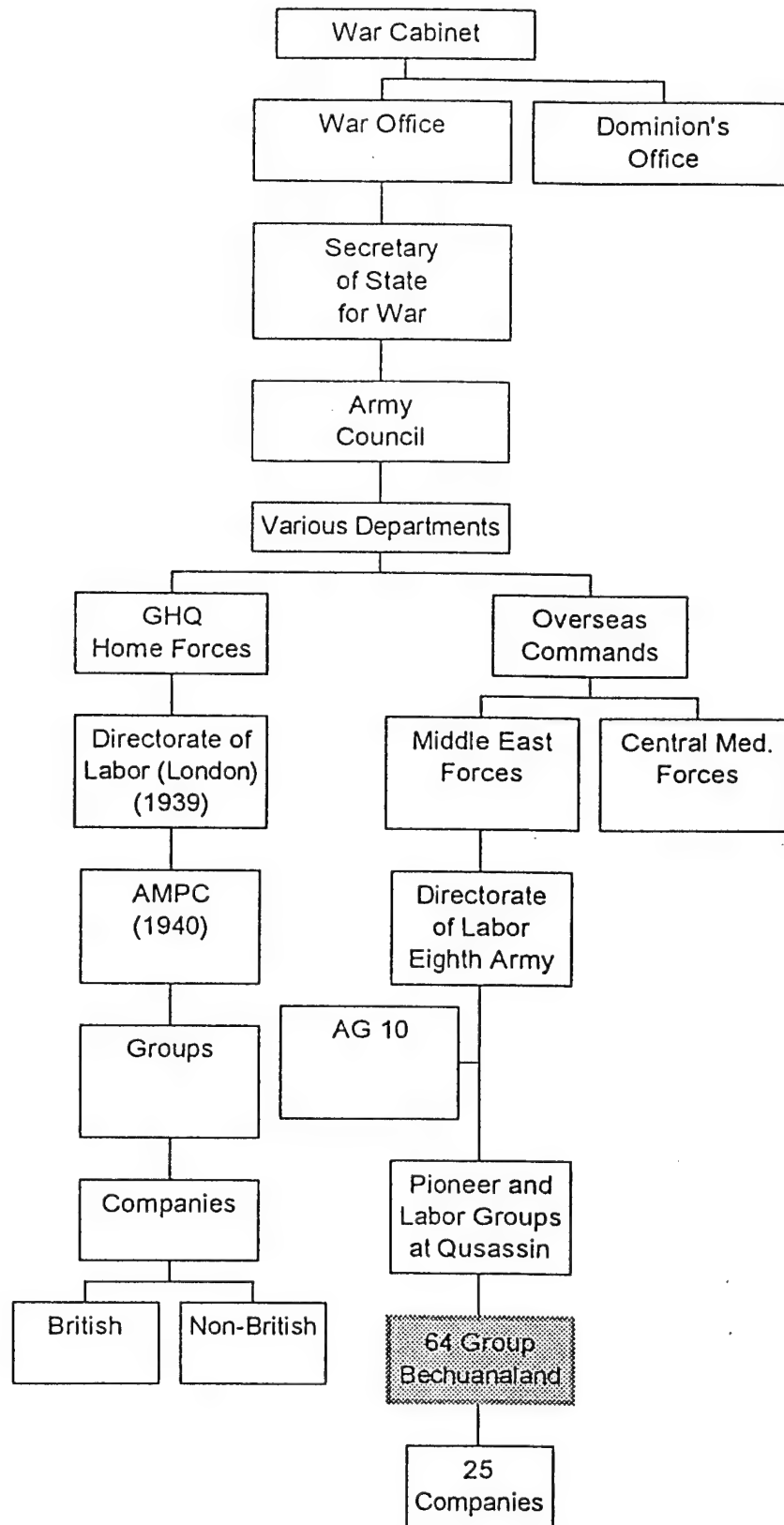
⁸⁸Ibid., 18; 196. There were 10 Groups and 72 companies by the end of 1939; 17 Groups and 101 companies in May 1940; 51 Groups and 263 companies in Dec 1940 (19 non-British). In 1943, Italian prisoner-of-war companies were formed to meet labor demands!

⁸⁹Ibid., 19.

⁹⁰Ibid., 20-22.

⁹¹Ibid., 90.

Command Structure for AAPC



In addition, East Africans (43, 53, 55 and 59 Groups) were recruited in May 1941. West Africans, recruited in August 1942, were also sent to the Middle East.⁹²

Since the many thousands of Colonial Pioneers to be produced from this vast campaign of recruitment were to be despatched as speedily as possible to Egypt, it became obvious that a depot was required to receive, equip and train the men. A new Pioneer Corps depot was opened deep in the desert at Qasassin under the command of LtCol H.G.L. Prynne.⁹³ This desolate spot was where the first companies from Bechuanaland were headed in October 1941.

Upon disembarkation from the ships, the men were loaded into lorries (trucks), or put into trains, for the long ride through the desert to the depot.⁹⁴ Major Rhodes-Wood describes the conditions, "open to the burning sun of day and the bitter winds of night, open to the full force of gritty sandstorms and stinging dustwhirls; bleak, barren and desolate, such was Qasassin Depot."⁹⁵ The disconsolate men had little time to reflect on their grim surroundings, training began immediately. Acclimitization took several weeks, so the men were issued warm clothing and blankets to ward off the night chills. Commanders feared that the men might be susceptible to pneumonia or other respiratory diseases.⁹⁶

The BaTswana companies were camped together under the Bechuana

⁹²Ibid., 117.

⁹³So states the official record, but seldom was a statement more misleading. "Most remote of all the military camps in the Canal Zone, set deeper in the desert than any other, nothing in all the bleak landscape was already more "open" than the three square miles of desert at Qasassin", writes Rhodes-Wood, in A War History of the Royal Pioneer Corps, 119.

⁹⁴It took two days to reach Base Camp. PRO DO35 1183/Y1069/32, Unpublished pamphlet on Swaziland Pioneers, September 1941-March 1945.

⁹⁵Ibid.

⁹⁶Most of the men with chronic lung diseases acquired in the mines prior to 1941 never passed entry physicals. However, an examination of war-time casualty registers reflect that many died on active duty from various types of TB, heart problems and pneumonia. Full list in BNB 5304, AAPC Register of Casualties.

Pioneer Group (64 Group), equivalent to a battalion headquarters, which had accompanied them from Bechuanaland (See AAPC organizational chart on the next page). Near them were the Basuto and Swazi, with whom they were familiar; but there were many others:

There were labor and guard companies from Tanganyika, Kenya and Uganda, some in the uniform of the King's African Rifles; there were Sudanese companies with their green sashes, Indian companies with massive turbans, Palestinian Arab companies, Palestinian Jewish companies, Yemites, Cypriots, Greeks, Mauritians, Seychellois, Maltese, and one mixed company which ranged from Spaniards and Yugoslavs to Egyptians.⁹⁷

AAPC veteran Sello Bogatsu met Africans from many different countries at Qasassin Camp. "I met a soldier from Nigeria who said that he was fighting for his independence," recalled Sello in 1994.⁹⁸

Initially, the work load was light in order for the men to get used to their different physical surroundings. After they had been in camp for 10 days, a full day's work was expected. The Bechuana Pioneer Corps spent thirty days at the depot receiving additional equipment and training.⁹⁹ It was at Qasassin that the men received the coveted battle dress uniform: two piece khaki serge uniform with long trousers, web anklets, full blouse, shirt, web belt and hat.¹⁰⁰ The men were proud to wear their new uniforms, and many arranged for photographs to be taken for family members back home.¹⁰¹ Gas mask haversacks, gas capes, steel helmets (round), and ammunition pouches were standard accouterments issued to the men. Rifles, the most prized item of a soldier, were finally distributed to some Bechuana at Qasassin.¹⁰² However, weapons

⁹⁷R.A.R. Bent, Ten Thousand Men, 13.

⁹⁸Interview by author, Tlokweneng, 16 July 1994.

⁹⁹By the end of December 1941, troops were passing in and out of the Depot at an average rate of 10,000 a month. Major Rhodes-Wood, A War History of the Royal Pioneer Corps, 126.

¹⁰⁰The British Army in WWII, 112-113. Perhaps part of the allure of the Battle Dress Uniform was the wearing of long pants. For it was well-known that only school boys wore "short pants". The British tropical uniform of khaki short sleeve shirt, shorts, and knee socks was fine for hot weather assignments, but it was not a "smart" uniform compared to the Battle Dress combination.

¹⁰¹BNA S 137/1/5, Photographs of AAPC Soldiers.

¹⁰²Edward Roux, Time Longer Than Rope, 307.

were still in short supply and others were given only knobkerries and assegais. According to Edward Roux, when Tshekedi Khama visited his men in 1943, he was furious. He had persuaded many of his people to join upon the understanding that they would all be armed. When he went to Egypt, they showed him their assegais and asked whether those were the "arms" he had meant. Further, they declared that on occasions they were stationed at places in the desert where they might easily be attacked by the enemy. When they asked the British officer in charge what equipment they should take, he replied: "Assegais will be of no use. Better not take anything."¹⁰³ Tshekedi wrote letters to army authorities when he returned complaining about the gun situation.

Training at Qasassin consisted of additional drill practice, lectures on using respirators, and weapons instruction at the rifle range.¹⁰⁴ The men were required to take their turn at guard duties and in working parties for the wing and the depot itself. Education was considered important and various classes were taught in a "large and well-fitted education tent."¹⁰⁵ Specialized training was also given in driving and vehicle maintenance, for each unit on leaving had to drive away in its own transport.¹⁰⁶ The driving course was comprehensive as it included the study of a completely dismantled truck engine and chassis. Before a student was given driving lessons, he also took classes on automobile repair.¹⁰⁷ In 1943, a new school opened at the Pioneer Depot which taught cobbling, tailoring and cooking. Former servicemen, Ramonaka Semele, proudly recalled his initial training and first job as

¹⁰³Ibid. Information supplied to Roux by a missionary who had interviewed Tshekedi Khama in January 1943.

¹⁰⁴Many of the weapons used were captured Italian rifles. R.A.R. Bent, Ten Thousand Men, 13.

¹⁰⁵BNA S 133/2/1, Report on depot life by news correspondent Lister, 23 August 1945.

¹⁰⁶Major Rhodes-Wood, A War History of the Royal Pioneer Corps, 127.

¹⁰⁷PRO DO35 1183/Y1069/1/1, Middle East News from Colonel Walker, 30 October 1943. At least six AAPC soldiers died of motor accidents during the war. See BNA 5304, AAPC Register of Casualties. (A few others just say "accident" but cause unknown).

a cook near Tobruk when interviewed in 1994. Veteran Semanngalele Ngakaemang recollected that he received advanced training, rose to the rank of sergeant, and eventually supervised kitchen staff in Italy.¹⁰⁸ These jobs may seem elementary, but the care and feeding of service personnel is crucial to the accomplishment of the mission and these men served in important capacities within the Pioneer Corps. All the Pioneers, regardless of their military specialties, were expected to take their training seriously and adjust to depot life. British official army policy also decreed that, regardless of race, caste, nationality or custom, every man also had to learn the same military skills, manners and codes of conduct necessary for the smooth operation of a military command. Education and training at Qasassin would strive to develop job proficiency and professionalism.

The life was hard at Qasassin but there were amenities. There were hot showers everyday, plenty of food, welfare huts and canteens, sporting activities, recitals, religious services, and specialized medical care at the new South African hospital.¹⁰⁹ Y.M.C.A. units operated tea cars and mobile cinema vans throughout the Western Desert.¹¹⁰ The movies consisted of war newsreels, home news, and cartoons.¹¹¹ Educational trips to Cairo were also planned by the

¹⁰⁸Interviews by author, Kumakwane and Odi, 13-19 July 1994.

¹⁰⁹Much of this was built through the personal efforts of the camp commander, Colonel Prynne, in conjunction with South African authorities. British funds for facilities at the camp were not forthcoming. Major Rhodes-Wood, A War History of the Royal Pioneer Corps, 121-123.

¹¹⁰A regular feature in the South African newspaper Bantu World was an article or cartoon about the tea cars in the deserts of North Africa. The paper was printed in English and therefore its readership was composed mainly of educated Africans. The paper was a forum for African writers who criticized the South African government's policy of limiting African participation in the war to a non-combatent status.

¹¹¹A film depicting local news items was made in Bechuanaland and taken up north to be shown to the troops. Popeye was reported to be a favorite cartoon among the troops. Bantu World, 20 June 1942, children's supplement.

Information Officers in the army.¹¹² Sergeant Mothiba described his first tour in an article published in the The Bantu World:

We spent last Friday in Cairo. Most of the day was spent in the Zoo gardens--a beautiful zoo they have and in the evening we attended what they call the "Oriental Cabaret." (That is the original dance of the Arabic people). It was really interesting and worth seeing. Another place we paid a visit to was the Japanese gardens at Helwan. Here there are beautiful gardens with statuettes. The language is Arabic. It is a bit difficult language to understand, but I think the longer we stay here and have contact with the people daily, the sooner it might be to learn it.¹¹³

The men also visited the pyramids, the Sphinx and other places of historic significance.¹¹⁴ Colonel Prynne, the C/O, ensured that African Pioneers received equal treatment and the opportunities of other labor units, securing the best supplies available in the Middle East. According to Major Rhodes-Wood, the African Pioneers were fortunate to have a commander that took such an interest in their continued progress, safety, and good morale.¹¹⁵ Unfortunately, African soldiers have left few historical accounts of their initial exposure to army life at Qassasin.¹¹⁶

At the beginning of December 1941, the first six Bechuana companies moved from the Pioneer Depot to the Ninth Army. They were sent to Syria, Palestine and Lebanon¹¹⁷, and all but a few companies, as they arrived in later months, were to follow them after their

¹¹²"Union's Native Corps in Middle East," Mafeking Mail, 24 October 1941. Guided tours were not necessarily a leisure activity, but military formations supervised by Sergeants on strict itineraries.

¹¹³Henry Nxumalo, "News from the Camps," Bantu World, 18 October 1941, 12.

¹¹⁴Ibid.

¹¹⁵E.H. Rhodes-Wood, A War History of the Royal Pioneer Corps, 123.

¹¹⁶From my own personal experience, I can say with certainty that the men had little time or inclination to write during their initial army training. "Technical schools" run by military personnel are fast paced. What leisure time is offered, is usually spent sleeping or visiting with other soldiers. I imagine it was the same in WWII.

¹¹⁷It had been decided that the men from the HCT would not be sent to the Western Desert because two South African Divisions were stationed there, together with the South African Native Military Corps. BNA S 136/6, Report on the Proceedings of the Resident Commissioner's Conference held in Pretoria, 15 October 1941.

preliminary training period at Qasassin.¹¹⁸

III. Pioneer Responsibilities in the Middle East and the Question of "Dilution"

As already suggested, in the military sense the words "Pioneer" and "Labor" are synonymous. The tasks performed by soldiers assigned these military specialties encompassed a wide variety of manual labor. A military specialty closely related to labor was engineering. Engineers or "Sappers" were concerned with the construction and demolition of bridges, roads, and fortifications.¹¹⁹ Historically, Pioneers in the British army had always been pick and shovel men as depicted on the badge that every AAPC man wore. The work performed by the AAPC in Syria, Palestine, and Lebanon between 1941 and 1942 were typical assignments for Pioneer units.

When the first six companies arrived in Syria, they worked in conjunction with British, Australians and New Zealanders building defenses at Ras-el-Baalbek and Jdeide.¹²⁰ Construction began immediately on tank-traps, gun emplacements, road blocks, and bomb shelters.¹²¹ Bechuana Pioneers also assisted the Royal Engineers with road-making, bridge-building, and tunnelling. Several of their most important tasks were building the railway from Haifa to Beirut, as well as a road from Akabar to join the Hejaz Railway.¹²² This was of strategic importance to the British position in the Middle East--it was the main supply route to Syria.¹²³ Loading ammunition and bombs on to trains at the Taalya

¹¹⁸BNA S 137/1/2, Minutes of the 23rd Session of the African Advisory Council 13-18 April 1942.

¹¹⁹The Royal Engineers were skilled "tradesmen" employed in building garrisons, railways, docks, waterways, etc. Engineers were also trained to fight, and were, when needed, used as infantry. The British Army in WWII, 47.

¹²⁰R.A.R. Bent, Ten Thousand Men, 17.

¹²¹Robert Kgasia, E.C. 10467, interview by author, Kanye, 7 July 1994.

¹²²BNA S 136/6, Report on the Proceedings of the Resident Commissioner's Conference held in Pretoria, 15 October 1941.

¹²³R.A.R. Bent, Ten Thousand Men, 20.

ammunition depot was another important job.¹²⁴ The work required tremendous stamina and it was not unusual for the men to work ten hour days, and seven hours on Sundays. Sello Bogatsu, recalled that there was little free-time in Syria during 1941-42: "I had to pull guard when I was not working at my regular duties--the Arabs were thieves."¹²⁵ Veteran Selawe Sawete also stated that the work was hard, but he remembered one day of reprieve, "In our spare time we drilled and practised shooting. On Sundays we sometimes went to Arab places."¹²⁶

During their first winter in Syria, the men endured severe weather. Snow, icy winds and the extreme cold were something the men had never experienced.¹²⁷ "The snow was as high as a rondoal in many places in Syria," recalled Podithomo Kolobe of 1975 Coy. "We had to wear two pairs of socks, a balaclava cap, pullover, gloves and our steel helmet in order to stay warm."¹²⁸ Unlike Qasassin, the accommodations in the Middle East were rudimentary. A few of the troops were lucky enough to live in permanent barracks or in buildings of solid construction, but the great majority of soldiers slept in tents on the hard, frozen ground. Frequently the tents blew away in the fierce winter storms, and the men would awaken to snow on their blankets.¹²⁹ Despite the winter weather and less than adequate facilities, the health of the soldiers remained good. There were only a few cases of frostbite

¹²⁴Sello Bogatsu, E.C. 3166, Tlokweg, interview by author, 16 July 1994.

¹²⁵Ibid. Stealing was rife, particularly in Palestine and Syria, and some thieves had been shot by AAPC guards. On one occasion, guards tackled four Arabs attempting to break into a ammunition dump; they knocked all four out with the butt of a rifle. See also PRO DO35 1183/Y1069, F252, Report on Arab thieves.

¹²⁶Selawe Sawete, Interview by Barry Morton, Matlapaneng, Note 31, 10 November 1993. This ex-soldier, along with others interviewed by Barry, also remembered strikes over bad food in the Middle East. In particular, the maize meal was old and the meat unfamiliar or spoiled.

¹²⁷Robert Kgasa recalls burying a soldier after he fell asleep and froze to death in the snow in Syria. Interview by author, Kanye, 7 July 1994.

¹²⁸Podithomo Kolobe, 1975 Company, interview by author, 19 July 1994.

¹²⁹PRO DO35 1183/Y1069/32, Unpublished Pamphlet on Swaziland Pioneers, September 1941-March 1945.

and pneumonia.¹³⁰

Many of the Bechuanaland companies remained in the Middle East throughout the war working exclusively in military labor occupations. First-hand accounts of labor service in the Middle East are scarce. However, General Auchinleck, the new C-in-C Middle East in 1942, wrote of their progress:

I am very well satisfied with the reports I have received of these [AAPC] units. They showed themselves, when in Egypt, to be smart and keen and I am already hearing very good accounts of their performance at their work. There can, therefore, be no sort of doubt that these units are going to be of great value to the Middle East Forces.¹³¹

In 1943, the Resident Commissioner of Basutoland visited the HCT serving in the Middle East. He reported favorably on the work of the AAPC:

I found the troops to be keen and in good heart. Their work and conduct have earned them a deservedly high reputation throughout the whole of the Middle East. Their health is good. There is relatively little crime and the general standard of discipline is satisfactory.

Our men are employed on a variety of duties. In Syria, I saw the railway and travelled over the roads which our men, working with the Australians, had built and on the stonework of a large bridge saw carved, as a permanent memorial of their work and association, the crests of the Australians and A.A.P.C. In the Western area I watched large flights of bombers take off to bomb Sicily from aerodromes which our men had built or repaired, and large convoys which took part in the invasion of Sicily were loaded by our men who have established some amazing records for moving great weights of materials and stores in a short time.¹³²

The work of the Pioneers was thus recognized by senior officials as vital. The men had showed a real sense of discipline, responsibility, and competency accomplishing the many varied tasks assigned to them by Headquarters. Many of the men had been part of the great effort of the Eighth Army in North Africa (some of them received Eighth Army patches as souvenirs), and now they were the main labor force of the Ninth Army

¹³⁰The largest sick-parade occurred in Lebanon. 1985 Company had 88 men report to the hospital with "snow feet". R.A.R. Bent, Ten Thousand Men, 21.

¹³¹BNA S 136/6, Letter from General J. Auchinleck to High Commissioner, 19 March 1942.

¹³²PRO DO35 1183/Y1069/1/1, F251, Report of Visit of the Resident Commissioner of Basutoland to the HCT Troops Serving in the Middle East, 27 May-20 July 1943.

in the Middle East.¹³³

The critical shortage of manpower within the British army continued to be a problem as 1941 drew to a close. It was proposed by G.H.Q./M.E.F. to explore the possibility of using African Pioneers for duties other than those strictly related to physical labor. Initially, General Napier Clavering requested that AAPC men from the HCT be used in garrison companies for employment in static units in the Middle East such as guarding prisoners-of-war compounds, ammunition depots, or as escorts on trains and barges.¹³⁴ Lord Harlech, the High Commissioner, approved of this scheme as long as the units were kept together and maintained their identity while employed in garrison work. Three Bechuana companies were subsequently trained as garrison units in Egypt: 1977 (BaNgwato), 1979 (BaNgwato) and 1983 (BaNgwaketse).¹³⁵ They were placed under 66 Group, Royal Pioneer Group, on military installations along the Suez Canal with duties to protect the installations against sabotage, theft and possible enemy paratroops.¹³⁶ The three companies remained on the Canal till the end of 1942 and then moved to the neighborhood of Alexandria.¹³⁷ The new Bechuana Garrison Coys, along with those recruited from Basutoland, were operational in only a few short weeks, but they only alleviated a small portion of the British manpower crisis. General Clavering realized that drastic measures were needed. He proposed that Africans be "diluted" directly into British

¹³³For information on Eighth Army badges see PRO D035 1183/Y1069/1/1 F245-249, Notes on HCT Troops in M.E.F., 14 August 1943.

¹³⁴BNA S 136/6, Letter from Lord Harlech to Forsyth Thompson, 8 January 1942 with attachment letter from General Clavering. General Clavering thought that this opportunity might also improve recruiting: "It is believed that many of the Natives in the Territories would prefer to join a purely fighting unit such as Infantry or Artillery rather than a Pioneer & Labour Company. If the H.C. agrees to the use of Native Territories personnel in garrison companies, such service might in part satisfy that ambition."

¹³⁵R.A.R. Bent, Ten Thousand Men, 27.

¹³⁶Ibid.

¹³⁷Ibid., 29.

units to further economize manpower.¹³⁸ As in the French army, "amalgamation" was considered a dramatic social experiment, but also a necessary measure to meet mission requirements.¹³⁹ In February 1942, an urgent request was sent to the HCT requesting that dilution be adopted on a large scale:

The question of using some of the AAPC units raised in the HCT to dilute British Units has arisen in an acute and urgent form. Briefly the position is that owing to the war in the Far East it has become impossible for the United Kingdom, Australia and India to supply Middle East with the personnel on which they had counted, they are therefore forced to look elsewhere and to do the best they can to eke out their present forces by means of dilution of British units by natives.¹⁴⁰

General Clavering proposed to "dilute" British units through two different methods. The first would be the most desirable, and that would be to completely replace British units with AAPC units; the second, was to transfer individual personnel into existing British units (this was already being done in some UDF units too).¹⁴¹ Clavering was not proposing to make the AAPC men combatants as the French and Americans¹⁴² were doing, but rather to open support fields which

¹³⁸"Dilution" is a labor term meaning the substitution of unskilled or semi-skilled for skilled workers. Historically, "dilution" is an old solution for a recurring problem of manpower shortages within the British Army. Units which were "diluted" in WWII were officially called--"Dilution Companies". The Indian Army during WWI was forced to "dilute" units with disappointing results. See Charles C. Trench, The Indian Army, 43.

¹³⁹According to Myron Echenberg, the French army decided to integrate African regiments with metropolitan French ones. Roughly half the African regiments were broken up, down to company level, and merged with French ones to form the *Regiments d'Infanterie Coloniale Mixtes Senegalais* (RICMS). See Colonial Conscripts, 91.

¹⁴⁰BNA S 136/6, Letter from C.N.A. Clarke to Nettelton, Ellenberger, Lawrenson, and Matthews, 21 February 1942.

¹⁴¹BNA S 136/6, Letter from General Clavering to 203 Military Mission, Pretoria, 15 December 1941.

¹⁴²General Eisenhower, as Supreme Allied Commander, also approved a plan to recruit American Negro platoons, commanded by combat-experienced white officers, for infantry service in Germany. Negro soldiers performed well in combat situations, which led to a reevaluation of Army discriminatory policies. Bernard C. Nalty, Strength for the Fight: A History of Black Americans in the Military (New York: The Free Press, 1986), 162-184; Blacks in the Military: Essential Documents, edited by Bernard C. Nalty and Morris J. MacGregor (Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources, Inc., 1981), 131-132.

previously had been closed to Africans.¹⁴³ These included:

- 1) The Mideast Fire Service (M.E.F.S.)
- 2) Anti-Aircraft Batteries (A.A.)
- 3) Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (R.E.M.E.)
- 4) Mechanical Transport Units (M.T.)
- 5) Signals Units (R Sigs)
- 6) Some Medical Fields

Duties the men were expected to perform included: AALM gunner, batman, cook (African troops), cook (European troops), driver IC (Internal Combustion), gun number, sanitary duties, and administrative duties. In the case of engineering, signals and medical, the duties included: drivers, batmen, cooks, general duties, water duties, sanitary, with the addition of specialized duties according to the unit, e.g. lighterage, stretcher-bearer, and ambulance orderlies.¹⁴⁴ In 1943, the work of salvage operations was added to the list of fields open to Africans.

Dilution meant reorganization for targeted British units.¹⁴⁵ Only a few British Officers and NCOs were kept for leadership positions in each unit. For example, it was proposed that the personnel makeup of a Mechanical Transport Coy would consist of 10 British officers, 15 British NCOs and 370 trained Africans.¹⁴⁶ Generally, dilution was carried out by sections which entailed the breaking up of some existing AAPC companies, rendering their officers superfluous as company

¹⁴³According to one American historian, "the military services restricted women and male minorities to largely menial or 'feminized' jobs and arenas defined as 'non-combat' so that neither could compete equally for promotion. Wartime requirements, especially, drove inclusion and utilization, but not rank and file (or even senior leadership) acceptance of women and minority men." Lorry M. Fenner, "Ideology and Amnesia: The Public Debate on Women in the American Military, 1940-1973" PhD Dissertation, University of Michigan, 1995.

¹⁴⁴BNA S 136/6, Letter GHQ, MEF on Dilution Policy to 203 MilMiss, Pretoria, 3 February 1942.

¹⁴⁵The U.S. Army also used black soldiers to replace white soldiers in service units, freeing troops to serve in combat. According to one American observer, the policy was unpopular. "I have never seen more depressed troops", wrote Walter White. The policy did not have an official name, but was described as "cannibalization"--taking men from one unit and feeding them into another. Nalty, Strength for the Fight, 167; 179.

¹⁴⁶A regular AAPC unit had 6 British officers and NCO's: 1 Major, O/C; 1 Captain, Second in Command; 4 Lieutenants, Company Officers; 1 C.S.M; and 1 C.Q.M.S. R.A.R. Bent, Ten Thousand Men, 108; BNA S 136/6.

officers. It was proposed that a small number of officers with knowledge of HCT troops be retained as a body of assistants to Colonel How in the Middle East.¹⁴⁷ In addition to the total reorganization of many Middle East Forces, there were many problems with this controversial amalgamation policy. To say the least, the new "social experiment" was controversial!¹⁴⁸

General Clavering's proposal was received with trepidation by the High Commissioner and other HCT officials. First of all, no one liked the policy because it negated the negotiated terms of service for the HCT as worked out between all parties in 1941.¹⁴⁹ Even more significant were the possible political repercussions within the Union. Although the Union Defence Force had already used some African dilutees because of manpower shortages, Lord Harlech thought that dilution was more appropriate for Union soldiers because they were more "detribalized" and came from towns.¹⁵⁰ Further, he argued:

In my opinion Basutos, Bechuanas and Swazis, with all the language difficulties and differences of tribal customs and traditions, are much better kept as units and not mixed up with other regiments or formations or with each other, still less with other African Natives.¹⁵¹

It was pointed out by the British commander, 203 MilMiss Pretoria, "that

¹⁴⁷Colonel How was the liaison for HCT troops at the Pioneer Depot, MEF.

¹⁴⁸The Paramount Chief and Council of Swaziland opposed the dilution of Swazi companies. The Swazis serving in the M.E. wanted dilution. However, Swazi companies were never assigned with British personnel. PRO DO35/1183/Y1069/1/1, Report on HCT Troops in Middle East, by C.N.A. Clarke, 31 July 1943.

¹⁴⁹Terms and conditions of service discussed in chapter 5.

¹⁵⁰BNA S 136/6, Letter from Lord Harlech to Brigadier A.G. Salisbury-Jones, 5 January 1942. This argument reflects Lord Harlech's bias towards the "neglected" Protectorate. Bechuanaland was considered by colonial officials to be more "traditional", rural, and undeveloped. Because of these attributes, the AAPC soldiers from Bechuanaland were probably considered incapable of taking on increased responsibilities. On the other side of the argument, urbanized Africans in the Union were more "worldly" and thus more capable. Harlech wrote, "so many of these tribal Bantu from 'reserves' have had little contact with Western civilization except under the closely guarded conditions of a mining compound, while working splendidly in a mass fail when left on their own individual responsibility".

¹⁵¹Ibid.

abuses often occurred when Africans were employed in very small numbers in scattered units".¹⁵² When Lord Harlech approached the Resident Commissioner, C.N.A. Clarke, the response was equally negative:

I am not in favour of the suggested policy of dilution...on the lines of the U.D.F. The Bechuana should be kept together...as native units. One of the reasons why the Bechuana would not agree to join the Union Native Military Labour Corps was...they would lose their identity as Bechuana units and...they would preserve their identity...when the AAPC was started.¹⁵³

The District Commissioners worried that the diluted units would not have the same level of officership as other AAPC units.¹⁵⁴ Many of the original units were led by men from the Protectorate who understood the men's backgrounds and needs. Additionally, the BaTswana performed well and received great praise as Pioneers. What if they did not perform well in their new duties?¹⁵⁵ After much discussion, the diKgosi were approached about the labor integration scheme. Clarke, in particular, was worried that the BaTswana leaders might complain about broken promises and refuse to help with further recruiting in the Protectorate.

The Resident Commissioner was not far off the mark. When the diKgosi were approached with the new scheme, they were wary. Initially, the fear was that higher manpower quotas would be imposed on the merafe or that those already in the AAPC would be involuntarily placed in combat related fields. Tshekedi Khama, the most vocal of the diKgosi, realized that the men might reap additional benefits from joint training and was at least somewhat supportive. He stated, "the men had gone forward to fight for their own people and for their Government and that, therefore, they were prepared to do whatever was asked of them.

¹⁵²BNA S 136/6, Letter from 203 MilMiss, Pretoria to Priestman at High Commission, 29 January 1942.

¹⁵³BNA S 136/6, Letter from C.N.A. Clarke to Lord Harlech, 10 January 1942.

¹⁵⁴BNA S 136/6, Letter from Nettleton to C.N.A. Clarke, February 26, 1942.

¹⁵⁵Ibid. "Dilution" fields were in some cases more technical. The education level of most AAPC recruits reflected that of the Protectorate and it was a legitimate concern that the men might not perform as well, especially since training would be fast-paced. The problems of language and literacy were also a concern to colonial officials.

However, he was very concerned about safeguarding the interests and welfare of his men".¹⁵⁶ He demanded that the men in existing AAPC units be asked to volunteer to work in British units; there was to be no coercion. With great reluctance, Tshekedi authorized an additional recruitment quota of 500 BaNgwato to participate in the dilution scheme on a trial basis.¹⁵⁷ He wanted to recruit the BaNgwato men for the new training from the mines and in the Union Native Military Corps and not from the Protectorate.¹⁵⁸ He may have had serious concerns about meeting further military commitments, since the BaNgwato had taken on the lion's share of the quotas.

Kgosi Bathoen (BaNgwaketse) also expressed grave reservations about BaTswana soldiers and new career opportunities within the AAPC:

Our manpower is a reserve on which the Government can call if the needs of the changing situation require it, and we on our part must do what we can to see that our men are ready for any call that may come. However, as Chief, I am concerned about the two assurances which were given to the men when they were recruited; a) that they were recruited and would serve as self contained units, and b) that they would form part of a labour corps and not be fighting units.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁶BNA S 136/6, Letter from Tshekedi to Clarke, 23 February 1942. Tshekedi's initial reaction to "dilution" is better understood in the context of war attitudes. Tshekedi was supportive of the British military effort because he wanted to ensure that he had a strong ally in future negotiations with South Africa over incorporation. He also knew that African resistance against the war was escalating in the Union. Tshekedi did not want those attitudes spreading to the Protectorate because they would further inhibit recruiting, which would create a bad impression with British officials. He wrote, "My impression gained as the result of a recent visit to Cape Town are that it would be advantageous to withdraw my people from contacts in the Union which give them an outlook not in accordance with our loyalty to the Crown".

¹⁵⁷Ibid.

¹⁵⁸BNA S 136/6, Memorandum from Tshekedi Khama to High Commissioner Regarding "Dilution" Policy, March 1942. It was always a sore point with Tshekedi that the Union made no efforts to return BaTswana men "hiding-out" in the mines avoiding merafe control. He had also tried several times to get BaTswana soldiers released from the NMC so that they could be enlisted into the AAPC. Both initiatives had been continually blocked by the High Commissioner who had his own manpower concerns within the Union. Competitive recruiting for employment in the Union between the mines, industry and agriculture was a constant nuisance.

¹⁵⁹BNA S 136/6, Letter from District Commissioner, Kanye incorporating Bathoen's position on dilution policy, 25 February 1942. Bathoen requested to confer with Tshekedi before making a final decision.

As Clarke expected, Bathoen and the other diKgosi wanted the BaTswana to remain as distinct units so that Bechuanaland would be recognized for participating in the war. Whether the men were to remain armed, was another major concern for all the diKgosi. According to the District Commissioner at Serowe, "the most important aspect is that of arms. We understand that all our men are armed and this gives them a great degree of confidence. They will not welcome being taken nearer the fighting and perhaps being disarmed."¹⁶⁰

In March 1942, Clarke wrote Lord Harlech that the diKgosi had agreed to cooperate with dilution despite the general feeling of dissatisfaction over the new policy.¹⁶¹ Clarke specified several conditions that had to be met by army officials. The Protectorate would go along with the policy as long as the men were volunteers and the new training policies was explained to them. The men were to keep their original regimental numbers identifying them with the AAPC. In addition, any future recruiting in the Protectorate was to be on the original basis of recruiting Pioneer Companies. If the men wanted to volunteer for other duties once in theater, it was up to them.

Clarke was in a difficult position regarding the dilution proposal. There was going to be another heavy push for recruiting within the Protectorate and he desperately needed the support of Tshekedi and the other diKgosi.¹⁶² Politically, he did not want to arouse feelings of resentment among the Chamber of Mines or other

¹⁶⁰BNA S 136/6, Letter from DC Serowe, 25 February 1942. Some "dilution" fields did not require the men to be armed, especially anything related to medical, i.e. stretcher-bearers. A.A. Gunners would not need small arms while manning the big guns. There might have been some concern about armed Africans working with British NCOs on a daily basis, but I found no reference to this in my research.

¹⁶¹BNA S 136/6, Letter from Arden-Clarke to Lord Harlech, 2 March 1942.

¹⁶²General Auchinleck was calling for another 15,000 HCT troops; 5,000 from Bechuanaland. BNA S 136/6, Notes of Meeting Held in High Commissioner's Office, Friday, 13 May 1942.

government officials in South Africa.¹⁶³ He knew they did not want to allow the Bechuanaland diKgosi to recruit for the AAPC within the South African borders.

Tshekedi was also in an awkward position. He had been in Cape Town when the question of expanded training opportunities had been originally raised with the other diKgosi.¹⁶⁴ If he disapproved of the scheme, he would now appear to be a "trouble-maker". What Tshekedi decided to do was to "deny any responsibility for the dilution scheme". He wrote a memorandum to Lord Harlech outlining his position:

1) Our group is so small that to break it up as suggested for the "Dilution Policy" would result in leaving the balance with practically no effect as a self-contained unit;

2) If it is impressed on our people that the Officers responsible are anxious to reserve these men for duties in which they will feel they are nearer the fighting line than in purely a Pioneer role, naturally such an explanation will be applauded...many of our men desire to be nearer the fighting but such an explanation is misleading as this does not appear to be the aim...It seems clear that some of these men will of necessity have to be deprived of their arms. In consequence, if it is known to them they will fail to volunteer;

3) These duties¹⁶⁵ do not impress me at all for apart from their menial qualities our group cannot preserve its identity when its numbers have been asked to perform such proposed duties. For this type of duty, I think it would have been fairer to the men to have been expressly told when recruited from their Territories that they might be called to perform these services;

4) As we have been asked to express our views on this matter, I respectfully record that I am not impressed with the proposal and I do not agree with it. Such action as the Military Authorities might have taken on their own initiative without consultation with me I would not have felt concerned about nor found fault with¹⁶⁶;

¹⁶³BNA S 136/6, Letter from C.N.A. Clarke to Lord Harlech, 12 March 1942.

¹⁶⁴Whether Lord Harlech deliberately arranged for the subject of "dilution" to be raised with the other diKgosi while Tshekedi was gone is not known. In previous discussions, Tshekedi had taken the lead regarding recruiting for the AAPC. Whatever the reasons for Lord Harlech's decision, Tshekedi was insulted and not in good humor when he learned of "dilution".

¹⁶⁵Tshekedi is referring to the RE, Signals and Medical where duties included positions such as: batmen, drivers, cooks, general duties, water duties, sanitary, etc. Obviously, these new opportunities were demeaning and would require the men to be unarmed. BNA S 136/6, File on Dilution.

¹⁶⁶[my emphasis] Clarke's analysis of this remark to Harlech: "This is Tshekedi's way of saying that he does not like the policy of dilution, that he declines therefore to accept any responsibility for its adoption, but that if the policy is adopted by the Military Authorities on their own initiative as a result of military necessities he will have nothing to say on the subject". BNA S 136/6, Letter from

5) In view of recent reports conveying high praise of our men in their work as Pioneers, I feel it would be unfortunate to divert men who are naturally suited for Pioneer work to duties which they did not expect to be called upon to do.¹⁶⁷

Lord Harlech was not surprised with the response he received from the Bechuanaland Protectorate. When he wrote General Clavering, he expressed great doubts whether dilution would work with BaTswana troops.¹⁶⁸ He had received complaints of poor treatment of non-Europeans "diluted" within the UDF.¹⁶⁹ South African dilutees were treated with contempt by UDF officers and NCOs which was far from being in keeping with their status of "volunteer" soldiers.¹⁷⁰ Lord Harlech was afraid that the same problem would surface in British units. Politically, there was also the sensitive issue of their non-combatant status. Anti-aircraft gunners were combatants, were they not? Despite the rhetoric, army officials were given permission to begin the integrative training experiment using Basuto and Bechuana soldiers.

By June 1942, the controversy over dilution had begun to die down within the Protectorate.¹⁷¹ The British army had decided that HCT troops were ready for greater responsibilities, manpower shortages had reached

C.N.A. Clarke to Lord Harlech, 12 March 1942.

¹⁶⁷BNA S 136/6, Memorandum from TK dated March 1942 on "Dilution" Policy.

¹⁶⁸Lord Harlech was more open to Basuto participation because "they have some knowledge of English and they are generally more progressive and self-reliant than the more primitive and very tribal Bechuana or Swazi". He proposed that 2,000 Basutos be used first on an experimental basis before the scheme was put into full implementation with other HCT troops. BNA S 136/6, Lord Harlech to General Clavering, 19 February 1942.

¹⁶⁹Ibid. According to a note from Lord Harlech to Clarke (19 March 1942), the Secretary of State did not want AAPC men "diluted" into Dominion units because of the menial nature of the work and the possibility of friction.

¹⁷⁰BNA S 136/6, Letter from Defence Hdqs. Pretoria to Commanders UDF, 26 January 1942. Harlech was upset about the complaints and reminded the UDF commanders in the Middle East that the "Non-European had the mentality of a child and thus deserved sympathy and understanding. The soldiers were not to be treated as mere 'Kaffirs'. He wanted a change of attitude in order to ensure the efficiency of "diluted" units and to protect the future of the program."

¹⁷¹The visit of Mr. Nettelton, Kgosi Tshekedi and Bathoen to the Middle East during June 1942 alleviated many of their fears regarding "dilution".

a critical level, and unless Protectorate officials demanded otherwise, AAPC soldiers were going to be moved into needed positions. Volunteers had come forward in the Middle East and training was in progress. Basuto personnel were already employed in coastal artillery, Anti-Aircraft units, Ordnance Services, Army Fire Services, Royal Engineers, Royal Signals, Royal Army Ordnance Corps, and the Royal Army Service Corps (drivers).¹⁷²

The first Bechuana Companies to train as Anti-Aircraft gunners were the men of 1971 (BaNwaketse), 1972 (Bangwato), 1973 (BaKwena), 1974 (BaKgatlana and others), 1975 (BaNgwaketse), and 1976 (BaNgwato) Coys, which were among the first AAPC units to arrive in the Middle East.¹⁷³ After serving for a year in Syria, they moved to Egypt to attend the Royal Artillery School at Almaza.¹⁷⁴ According to official reports, the men were keen to learn their new job of firing the big 3.7 inch static and mobile guns.¹⁷⁵ After four weeks training, they were taken to a gun range about fifteen miles into the desert. One eye-witness records this event:

This was the greatest event of all. Live shells were used and the din was terrific. One rather expected the new gun teams to flinch at the noise, but they behaved as if they had been gunners all their lives. On this occasion, General Pollock presented the Bechuanaland sergeants with gunner badges.¹⁷⁶

When the companies were trained after two intensive months, the gun teams were moved to batteries at various places.¹⁷⁷ There were Heavy

¹⁷²BNA S 136/6, Brigadier Mills Report on "Dilution" at the High Commissioner's Conference, 13 May 1942.

¹⁷³R.A.R. Bent, Ten Thousand Men, 31.

¹⁷⁴BNA S 133/2/1, Newsletter from the Middle East, March 1942.

¹⁷⁵According to military historian Lynne B. Iglitzin, firing weapons or guns are important to the concept of masculinity and war.

"Masculinity is closely associated with the power to defend oneself, with a weapon if necessary." "War, Sex, Sports and Masculinity," in War: A Historical, Political, and Social Study, L.L. Farrar, Jr., ed. (California: ABC-CLIO, Inc, 1978), 65-66.

¹⁷⁶Ibid.

¹⁷⁷Bent estimated that 2,000 British soldiers, the equivalent of three battalions of infantry, could be released for combatant duty when the six Bechuana companies became trained successfully as A.A. gun crews. Ten Thousand Men, 31.

Anti-Aircraft (H.A.A.) regiments waiting for their Bechuana recruits all the way from Haifa to Libyan Tripoli.¹⁷⁸ The new gunners continued their training on the big guns for several weeks once assigned to a H.A.A. regiment. Veteran Robert Kgasa recalls his experiences as a fuse setter on the big guns:

Anti-aircraft duty was very difficult; it required a great amount of training! Many of the men who became gunners were from the mines. When they were hot [with the guns], they never missed. The planes could not get by, we cut off their sleeves [wings]. We shot down many planes.¹⁷⁹

Ex-Private Klaas Kapaletswe was also a gunner. He watched over the dials on the guns; setting the height and depression. "We shot down a spitfire in Libya," responded Klaas with pride, when asked about his gunnery duties.¹⁸⁰

Initially, dilution was praised by military planners and commanders in the field, "African soldiers were being successfully absorbed into new career fields."¹⁸¹ Inspectors reported that British gun team members and the new African recruits were getting along well. It was also noted that the men enjoyed this combat-related work more than labor duties.¹⁸² Bent recalls that even their home-sickness disappeared with the new challenge.¹⁸³ The scheme appeared to be an

¹⁷⁸1974 Coy was "diluted" with 61 H.A.A. Regt; 1975 Coy with 69 H.A.A. Regt; 1972 Coy with 73 H.A.A. and 1973 Coy with 78 H.A.A. Regt. PRO DO35 1183/Y1069/1/1 F29, Report on H.A.A. units, 21 November 1944.

¹⁷⁹Robert Kgasa, Interview by Author, Molepolole, 7 July 1994. As a Sergeant Major, Robert supervised and taught other African gunners.

¹⁸⁰Klaas Kapaletswe, Interview by Author, Tlokweng, 16 July 1994.

¹⁸¹Senior military officers from GHQ or the AA Command took great interest in these first companies that went through training and visited the men often. All reports indicate that they were pleased with the men's performance within the training school at Cairo. Dilution was deemed most successful with units of the Royal Artillery. PRO DO35 1183/Y1069/1/1, F244-249, Report HCT Troops in MEF, 14 August 1943.

¹⁸²PRO DO35 1183/Y1069/1/1, Report on Visit to the HCT Troops by C.N.A. Clarke, 31 July 1943. Gunnery demanded lots of training, but it was physically less demanding. There was also more prestige attached to working with guns than working with pick and shovels. One of my informants stressed during his interview, that "regrettably he had missed his chance to be a gunner and that he only loaded ammunition and performed supply duties". Interview with Sello Bogatsu by Author, Gaborone, July 1994.

¹⁸³R.A.R. Bent, Ten Thousand Men, 31.

unqualified success. However, there were indications that not everything was working smoothly for the AAPC men in their new assignments once they departed school.

One of the first problems recognized by the military officials in the Middle East was mobility. Not in the sense of actually moving the men around, that was indeed a tremendous problem, but in the sense of mobility as it relates to who is in charge. Ideally, AAPC soldiers which received specialized training and were subsequently transferred out of Pioneer Coys, were to have at least a few of their own [AAPC] officers assigned to their new units to provide continuity and assistance in the transition. However, in practical application this was rather difficult with casualties, the demands of promotion, and the need to provide large numbers of Pioneer officers in several theaters. The European officers in charge of AAPC units were all members of the Royal Pioneer Corps and transfers were frequent. Every effort was made to keep at least one officer familiar with the AAPC at company headquarters. He was assisted by an African Company Sergeant Major, an African sergeant-clerk and a driver.¹⁸⁴ Bent comments that mobility of labor was such a problem from 1943 onwards that there was no longer any Bechuana Group Headquarters.¹⁸⁵ The companies were now performing as "independent units", as they were shuttled about the theaters of war from one task to another. Later, in Italy it was not unknown for a company to pass through the commands of four Groups in a month.¹⁸⁶ According to Lieutenant Moffat who was assigned to 1981 Coy, "the transition stage from a compact company to the present state of affairs [dilution] was at first a little difficult for all concerned."¹⁸⁷

The transfer of AAPC men into British units was a cause of tension

¹⁸⁴Rhodes-Wood, A War History of the Royal Pioneer Corps, 158.

¹⁸⁵R.A.R. Bent, Ten Thousand Men, 25.

¹⁸⁶Ibid.

¹⁸⁷BNA DCS 30/1, Newsletter from Lieutenant R.L. Moffat, 1981 Coy, May 1942.

and strain within that unit. When a British commander was informed that he was to receive African trainees, his administrative problems doubled. G.H.Q. Middle East issued special orders in March 1942 which dictated policies to British commanders on the special care of African soldiers.¹⁸⁸ Liaison officers, which were often called "Dilution Officers", were assigned to each company to ensure compliance of the rules.¹⁸⁹ When company commanders received colonial transfers, construction of separate facilities commenced immediately.¹⁹⁰ African soldiers required, according to British military planners, separate cook-houses, messes, sleeping accommodations, canteens and medical facilities.¹⁹¹ Their mail was separated from European correspondence for translation and censorship. Pay and promotion were based on dissimilar, and I might stress, unequal principles. Special food was ordered through supply channels to meet African ration requirements, such as mealie meal.¹⁹² Unofficial military policy [not regulated] mandated

¹⁸⁸BNA S 136/6, Administrative Instructions for Units to Which AAPC Personnel are Attached, 19 March 1942. The only component of the British Army which had up to that point any experience with colonial soldiers were the Pioneers. British military policy and social norms of the period dictated segregation by race of military forces.

¹⁸⁹A special representative at G.H.Q., known as A.G. 10, in the Adjutant General's Department was assigned to oversee all the HCT men. Lt.Col. D.W. How, C.B.E., Assistant Resident Commissioner of Basutoland, was appointed to the office in 1942. He was responsible for visiting all units and advising officers new to African troops on managing dilutees. Col How died of malaria while at Haifa and was later replaced by Lt.Col. R. Charnock, O.B.E., M.C. R.A.R. Bent, Ten Thousand Men, 29.

¹⁹⁰U.S. Army policy regarding segregation by race came under attack during the war. In 1944 military theaters, post exchanges, clubs etc were integrated on U.S. army installations. Equal opportunities within the U.S. armed forces would largely come after the war. Lee Nichols, Breakthrough on the Color Front (New York: Random House, 1954), 42-43.

¹⁹¹African soldiers were not locked up as they had been in WWI in isolated compounds, but separate amenities within the camps were similar to those of mine compounds in South Africa as this quote by veteran Antonio Katiba confirms, "We kept to our compound much like in the mines". There were no military penalties for socializing with British soldiers, but military life mirrored civilian norms regarding separation by race and class, i.e. NCOs, regardless of race, did not socialize with officers; British BORS did not eat with African BORS, etc. Interview by Barry Morton, 20 November 1993, Note 34, Disaneng.

¹⁹²Mobile AA units often put African troops on the British scale of rations during moves. In some cases this caused problems with dietary restrictions and complaints followed. PRO D035 1183/Y1069/1/1, F245-249, Inspection Notes from Resident Commissioner of Basutoland, 14

different standards of discipline.¹⁹³ Africans were barred from fraternizing with white women or drinking strong spirits. Training was also more difficult. Since most of the men did not speak English fluently, simple instructions were required. Here again, these instructions were funneled through an interpreter who might or might not have understood the explanation or order.¹⁹⁴

Exactly how African trainees and British NCOs reacted to this new arrangement is hard to determine. Obviously, the British artillery regiments were sorry to lose their gunners, who had come with regiments from their own home districts and shared their traditions.¹⁹⁵ BaTswana veterans interviewed in 1994 remembered that they generally got along well with British officers and NCOs during the war. Veteran Semanngalele Ngakaemang stressed this point during his interview. He commented that, "AAPC men worked well with British Coys and experienced few problems with British sergeants. However, relations with South African Boers were a problem". Oualenna Lekalake agreed, "We got along well with the English, Americans and Canadians, but not with the South Africans".¹⁹⁶ Official army inspection reports reveal that most of the "dilution" companies experienced few difficulties, although it was recognized that the soldiers worked more efficiently under their own NCOs than junior British Other Ranks (BORs) or indeed any BNCOs, except

August 1943.

¹⁹³Unsanctioned institutional racism is when policies which sanction the differential treatment of certain races have been removed, but differential treatment is still realized. Unsanctioned racism could be covert or overt in nature. John S. Butler, Inequality in the Military: The Black Experience (Saratoga, California: Century Twenty One Publishing, 1980), 9.

¹⁹⁴There were never more than a dozen officers who had even a fair knowledge of SeTswana and not more than 5% - 10% of the Bechuana who could understand and speak English well. In consequence all commands, instructions, training, trials etc. had to be given or carried out through interpreters. PRO DO35 1183/Y1069/1/1, F82-89, Staff Study: Bechuana as Soldiers, 14 October 1945.

¹⁹⁵R.A.R. Bent, Ten Thousand Men, 34.

¹⁹⁶Interviews by author, Kumankwane, 14 July 1994. These attitudes reflect lingering hostilities towards South African whites. During the war, South African racist attitudes towards African soldiers was perceived as more virulent than British or American attitudes.

those of acknowledged seniority and proved ability and character.¹⁹⁷

However, a special report on the relationship between BORs and African dilutees within an Anti-Aircraft unit portrays a different picture.¹⁹⁸ The report surfaced in February 1946 but discussed problems dating back to the first dilution companies.¹⁹⁹ More than anything else, the report reveals the misunderstandings and difficulties experienced by two very different peoples within the confines of the British military structure. Interracial relationships within the army were very much patterned after those which existed in civil life. A few excerpts from the report will provide a glimpse of Bechuana and British relations, albeit through British eyes only:

Before the Africans joined us, our British ORs were warned that the Bechuana would take offence if they were sworn at, or if they were called "blacks" or "niggers". The rough tongued NCO would not do; patience and kindness were to replace reprimands. In every way a great deal of trouble was taken to ensure that friction should be avoided...Our first complaint was about swearing. Pte Npagape asked for an orderly room, and alleged that his No.1 swore at him. Moreover, he added, his No.1 was too angry and stern with Africans.²⁰⁰

Africans began their gunnery with great keenness, and paid close attention to all that went on...3.7 gun dials, which required the ability to count, and read numbers up to 359, and to lay on course and find pointers to an accuracy to .1 of a degree baffled them at first, and not more than ten could be relied on lay accurately during their two years in AA...the amount of repetition required to train the Africans was immense. At an underestimate, they had two hundred hours instruction, before those chosen as layers were fully reliable.

It was evident soon after the Africans joined us that they were suspicious and distrustful of all our actions...[Regarding Christmas Gift Plan] Pte Molefe says he does not understand British custom, and says he will not believe in the Christmas gift until our wives write that it is so from Mochudi.

¹⁹⁷PRO DO35 1183/Y1069/1/1, F82-89, Staff Study: Bechuana as Soldiers in CMF, 14 October 1945.

¹⁹⁸PRO DO35 1183/Y1069/35, A Short Account of Relations between Bechuana and British in a HAA Troop, October 1945.

¹⁹⁹There seemed to be no clear reason why the report was filed with army officials so late. One possible explanation is that after the war, the army requested feedback on the dilution scheme for further study.

²⁰⁰No.1 refers to a position on a 3.7 inch heavy AA gun which was nearly always manned by British personnel.

If Army Regulations were difficult for the Africans, Military Law was a mystery. When the Africans had a grievance they thought that the Troop-Commander should call a meeting, and appear before it to answer the complaint.

The irrelevance of most of the testimony given by Africans is a proof that they were not at home in our procedure of methods of thought. Africans charged with an offence always defended themselves by trying to show that they were innocent of all offenses...The evidence given by Bechuana was never reliable.

Continuous contact with BORS for two years did not leave the Africans unaltered...[they] became more adaptable and self-reliant.

On the other side of the balance, was the African's claim for equality with BORS in treatment and reward...

As the Africans were largely ignorant of English, a regulation was made that they should not carry rifles as the BORS did. Instead, they were to keep five rounds in their greatcoat pocket. This regulation, maintained after the Africans were proficient with their weapons and knew some English, was a long-standing grievance among them.

Relations between AORs and the BORS soon resolved into distrust on the one hand, and indifference on the other. The BORS interest in the Africans quickly evaporated. They had nothing in common. The BORS were conscious that the main weight of unit efficiency fell on them, and they saw the very evident limitations of the African.

African gunners meant more work, more responsibility, and more supervision for NCOs. Very soon there was a tendency on the part of BORS to give the African the disagreeable jobs and the extra fatigues...and all the guards.²⁰¹ It was acknowledged by the BORS that the Africans did their work well, but any suggestion that the Africans deserved better pay, or the same treatment as Europeans was ridiculed.

The Africans were not slow to recognize this tendency and question it more strongly than they would have done before they had entered the Army. In two years they had seen a great deal of the White Man at close range, and they had lost much of their respect.

So there grew up a feeling of hostility towards BORS which culminated in increased demands, and several acts of violence.²⁰²

Obviously, there were problems within racially integrated British units.

²⁰¹This was noted by Major Germond in August 1943 when inspecting a "Dilution" company: "On dilution this section were given to understand that they would be instructed in "bridge maintenance"; and the fact that they have only been employed on fatigue duties has lowered their morale considerably. This together with the disinterest shown generally has given the men a feeling that they are completely forgotten." PRO D035 1183/Y1069/1/1, F214-233, Tour of Canal Area by DAAG, September 1943.

²⁰²PRO D035 1183/Y1069/1/1, Staff Study: Bechuana as Soldiers, 14 October 1945.

In principal, the men of the AAPC should have been treated equally with other BOR doing the same work. In fact, under the Army Act, Bechuana NCOs were legally senior to UK NCOs of equivalent rank but later promotion date.²⁰³ However, it was hard for the BOR to ignore the racial component of their units and overcome pre-existing prejudices. For example, the commander of 69th and 89th Hvy AA Regiments ordered that "all African NCOs when being addressed by BNCOs of equal or superior rank will stand at attention". When confronted by A.G.10 about the policy, the commander demanded a ruling on the position and rank of African NCOs as opposed to British NCOs.²⁰⁴ Perhaps because the BaTswana were unarmed auxiliaries, other soldiers looked down upon them.²⁰⁵ According to military historian Walter Wilcox, only those who were "true soldiers" were respected in the war:

The rear echelon which consisted of everyone beyond the range of a machine gun and mortar fire was to be considered, referred to and thought of with disdain, contempt, and even with pity, the pity that man feels towards the half man.²⁰⁶

Veteran Jacob Marapi remembers well that "white soldiers did not look up to black NCOs".²⁰⁷ Mutual understanding and respect was not always forthcoming and disillusionment was often the result.²⁰⁸ Other racial incidents which caused minor problems were the following:

²⁰³PRO DO35 1183/Y1069/1/1, F82-89, Staff Study: Bechuana Soldiers in CMF, by C.N.A. Clarke, 14 October 1945, "Attempts by them [AAPC NCOs] to give orders to UK NCOs technically their junior were unheard of but many Bechuana NCOs became fairly soon watchful that UK NCOs junior to them did not try to give them orders by virtue of some assumed right of colour."

²⁰⁴PRO DO35 1183/Y1069/1/1, F214-233, Tour of Canal Area by DAAG (Major Germond), September 1943.

²⁰⁵"War is the ultimate testing-ground for manhood in many societies." Lynne Iglitzin, "War, Sex, Sports, and Masculinity," 63-67.

²⁰⁶Walter Wilcox, "The Loneliness of the Long Distance Soldier," in War and the Human Race, Maurice N. Walsh, ed. (Amsterdam: Elsevier Publishing Company, 1971), 87.

²⁰⁷Jacob Marapi, interview by Barry Morton, 25 November 1993, Note 73, SameDupe.

²⁰⁸O.J.E. Shiroya in Kenya and World War II (Nairobi: Kenya Literature Bureau, 1985) noted that "slave treatment" also resulted in enmity between East African soldiers and British authorities as the war progressed.

1) At one place two Africans were buried in a European cemetery. So much fuss was made about this that the bodies were exhumed and buried elsewhere.

2) Three European privates of the Union Defence Force on sentry duty quite gratuitously assaulted a sergeant of the AAPC. The matter was dealt with suitably but the dislike of the UDF personnel was increased by this and similar incidents.²⁰⁹

Racial problems that arose between European soldiers or officers and African soldiers should not be taken to mean that there was never sincere and genuine friendship, trust and co-operation between the two groups. However, friendship was most likely to flourish nearer the front-lines under battle conditions. The following statement made by an African soldier is representative of European-African race relations under severe conditions:

Among the shells and bullets, there had been no pride, no air of superiority from our European comrades-in-arms...we drank the same tea, used the same water and lavatories, and shared the same jokes. There were no racial insults, no references to "niggers", "baboons" and so on. The white heat of battle had blistered all that away and left only our common humanity and our fate either death or survival.²¹⁰

Colonel Collins reports that, "British and Africans worked together admirably and on equal terms when in contact with the enemy."²¹¹

However, when such units were withdrawn for rest, the Africans expected to remain on equal terms with their white comrades, while the latter preferred to exclude them from their billets, canteens and entertainments. Veteran Baletanye Gomosie recounted during his interview, "we did not mix with British soldiers off duty. A kind of Apartheid existed. It was strict."²¹² According to Collins, there was no remedy for racial discrimination, for it was unavoidable that there would be friction among soldiers divided by race, language, color, outlook, custom and education. In his opinion, the integration of

²⁰⁹BNA S 137/1/3, Confidential note from Major Redseth after Visit to M.E. in 1942.

²¹⁰Quote from O.J.E. Shiroya, Kenya and World War II, 39.

²¹¹PRO DO35 1183/Y1069/1/1, F123ff, Report on tour in the C.M.F. by Colonel E. Collins.

²¹²Baletanye Gomosie, interview by Barry Morton, 17 October 1993, Note 35, Maun.

troops was not a policy that would bear the strain of a long war, and it was anticipated that it would eventually break down.²¹³

How did the Bechuana Pioneers react to differential behavior by their British counterparts? According to official reports during the war, the BaTswana were generally conservative, quiet, polite and peace-loving peoples.²¹⁴ With a certain amount of skepticism, one could then assume that BaTswana soldiers displayed few outward signs of resistance to abuses within the British army.²¹⁵ Alternatively, the men often exhibited signs of uncertainty or embarrassment when confronted with new challenges. The above report on the Hvy AA unit describes their reactions during gunner training: "dilutees smiled or laughed when things went wrong".²¹⁶ British NCOs often responded negatively to such innocuous behavior. They thought the men were being "cheeky".²¹⁷ As Edward Steinhart suggests, this type of behavior might have been a cultural stratagem for avoiding or deflecting hostility. He writes, "the politics of confrontation themselves seemed to have been contrary to African cultural and political traditions. The tendency of Africans to avoid or deflect hostility by verbal and cultural stratagems--by joking, deception, or "signifying" one thing when meaning something else was often noted by observers of African behavior."²¹⁸

²¹³PRO DO35 1183/Y1069/1/1, F123ff, Report on tour in the C.M.F. by Colonel E. Collins.

²¹⁴R.A.R. Bent, Ten Thousand Men, 12.

²¹⁵Unlike the out-going Basuto, who always seem to be causing trouble according to army reports, the men from Bechuanaland were rarely written up as being trouble makers. PRO DO35 1183/Y1069/1/1, F22-29, Staff Study on Basuto and Bechuana Soldiers, 1945. Veterans generally remember very little trouble especially in the early years. Mahoko "Ramakao" Samosipa recalls there were three strikes by BaTswana in the Middle East: 1 in Cairo, 1 at Tripoli and 1 in W. Syria. According to him, they were all over food and there were no reprisals. Interview by Barry Morton, 5 November 1993, Note 28, Matlapaneng.

²¹⁶PRO DO35 1183/Y1069/35, A Short Account of Relations between Bechuana and British in a HAA Troop, October 1945.

²¹⁷UDF personnel thought that the AAPC were not "kept in their place" and were inclined to be insolent. BNA S 137/1/3, Confidential Note from Major Redseth after Visit to M.E. in 1942.

²¹⁸"Conflict and Collaboration," Historical Problems of Imperial Africa (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1994), 98.

When the dilution scheme was first proposed, the men were thrust into unfamiliar work which required in some cases higher educational standards, which most of them did not possess.²¹⁹ There was the language barrier, differences in customs, the stress of learning a new job, and inequalities to overcome. Sometimes if things went wrong, or if the men had a grievance, they might express their opposition in obstructionist tactics.²²⁰ Veteran Sitang Moeketsi remembers one such incident:

In 1942, there was a strike in Egypt when they were ordered by Sgt. Major Gunn to level a huge hill in order for a road to proceed. As the hill was big, they refused to work. After a couple of days they went back to work and were given dynamite, which frightened many of them. However, some guys who had been to the mines knew how to use it.²²¹

As this passage suggests, being obstinate was one strategy employed to acquire help when British officers ignored legitimate grievances. In spite of such incidents, only a handful of AAPC soldiers were involved in disciplinary incidents sufficiently severe to find their way into official war records.

BaTswana soldiers were noted for their sense of discipline and intelligent appreciation of the work they were doing for the war effort. Regardless of the many difficulties experienced within integrated companies, there was a sense of pride among the AAPC men when they were proficient in their new jobs. A letter from Sergeant Mokwena to the Resident Commissioner of Bechuanaland in 1943 read:

²¹⁹PRO DO35 1183/Y1069/1/1, F82-89, Staff Study: Bechuana as Soldiers in CMF, 14 October 1945. C.N.A. Clarke wrote, "In view of their comparative lack of education, of necessity Bechuana soldiers must rely even more heavily on their leaders than UK troops and they know it. Consequently, their trust is not easily won but once won is almost unlimited." Rev. Sandilands explains in About the Bechuana, that even among the literate ones, numbers and dials and gauges were difficult. There were few, if any, clocks or watches in Bechuanaland, and most could not read time. Others only knew the SeTswana name for numbers, even though they could count fairly well.

²²⁰British NCOs may have erroneously interpreted this as "dull" or "stupid" behavior.

²²¹Sitang Moeketsi, interview by Barry Morton, 16 January 1993, Note 64, Maun.

...I am sending your Honour a photograph of myself and some valiant comrades of mine in the R.A. Regiment as well as our companion of whom we are so proud called "Mobile Gun". When we are at this gun the enemy can shoot at us or take us prisoners only with God's help, otherwise he is spending himself in vain. In it we feel we have a mother who holds the knife by the blade, should the enemy make a mistake and come over us in an aeroplane that is his last day. We were frightened when we left our homes and we were diffident of our fighting power; in the AAPC we were mere women and children, but today we are calm and collected under all circumstances burning only with the desire to get to grips with the enemy and so great is our ardour that we feel like tearing him with our teeth.

I was teaching the men the names of the various parts of the "Breech Block"; though difficult the English language is, these men find no difficulty in remembering and pronouncing the words, this proves that if the will to do a thing is present all apparent difficulties disappear.

...we in North Africa who belong to this wonderful army which we members call the "Famous Eighth Army", this army did something that made us all laugh at the enemy who were stupid enough to put their fingers into red hot cinders while in their own minds they thought they were building up the fire; marvelous things happen but custom does not allow secrets of a regiment (initiation school) to be divulged. Day before yesterday we captured Pantellaria...²²²

Sergeant Gabolebye Dinti Marobele of 1966 BaNgwato Company sent this message home in July 1943:

We as Bamangwato have before us our Tribal motto, "With God all things are possible", and with this in view we have full confidence that before long victory will be won. We are determined to put our whole weight and efforts, no matter how insignificant they may appear, to the work we are out to do.²²³

There were several mechanisms in place within the army structure to facilitate good relationships between British and African soldiers. As mentioned earlier, "Dilution Officers" (usually men with prior Pioneer experience) were assigned to newly integrated regiments to handle matters of pay and domestic difficulties concerning African soldiers. They also served many other functions. They were often appointed as the units' education officer. Duties included providing lectures to the men

²²²There are only a few letters which have survived that describe work conditions within the AAPC. This one is particularly special because it discusses "feelings" rather than just facts. BNA DCG 3/7 Box No. 3, Letter from Sgt. S. Mokwena, 192 H.A.A. Bty. MEF, to the Resident Commissioner dated 13 June 1943; also copy in BNA S 141/3/1.

²²³PRO DO35 1183/Y1069/1/1, F262, Message home dated 1 July 1943.

on the course of the war, arranging visits to leave camps and town, and the supervision of canteens. BaTswana newspapers and news letters were compiled and distributed to the men by these officers.²²⁴ It was a matter of great concern to army leaders that appropriate British personnel be selected for this important job, and only those men who were considered flexible and willing to get along with others, got the job.²²⁵ The welfare and morale of a unit depended heavily on the individual appointment of this position.²²⁶

The continuous inspections of Pioneer and Dilution companies by A.G.10, a special arm of the Director of Labor, was also very important in maintaining good relationships.²²⁷ The men who conducted these inspections were high-ranking officers with a direct interest in dealing with complaints and keeping the soldiers productive.²²⁸ They continually made recommendations to GHQ/MEF on personnel changes, discipline, health, rations, welfare and leave. Copies of their inspection reports were sent to the 203 Military Mission in Pretoria and to each of the Government Secretaries in the HCT. As the prolific inspection files at the Public Record Office in London attests, communication channels were open and working surprisingly well.²²⁹ However, reports serve only a limited purpose, that of identifying the problems, and it did not at all

²²⁴R.A.R. Bent, Ten Thousand Men, 33.

²²⁵BNA S 137/1/3, Note by the Assistant Resident Commissioner after Visit to the Middle East, 1942. "Liaison officers with dilution units were carefully selected: only the earnest and conscientious were chosen".

²²⁶Ibid.

²²⁷A.G. 10 section of the D.D. of O. & P.S. was tasked to provide for the morale and welfare of H.C.T. troops. In 1943, the staff consisted of a Lieutenant Colonel, Major and a Staff Captain. It was hoped that one officer would be on tour continuously visiting the 30,000 men from the H.C.T. dispersed throughout the Middle East. PRO DO35 1183/Y1069/1/1, Report on HCT in the Middle East, by C.N.A. Clarke, 31 July 1943.

²²⁸Three men and their assistants were particularly good at this job: Lt.Col R. Charnock, Colonel E. Collins and Colonel S.H. Walker. Their reports indicate a true concern for improving the conditions for the AAPC. For a partial list of A.G.10 officers see R.A.R. Bent, Ten Thousand Men, 114-15.

²²⁹Monthly reports on HCT were forwarded by Lt.Col Charnock or the deputy Major Germond.

guarantee anything was done.²³⁰ It was the men on the spot who had the power to solve the problems, and perhaps the most important individual responsible for enforcing good behavior within the ranks were the African regimental sergeant-major and the company sergeant major.

The role of the Regimental Sergeant Major (RSM) within the British army structure was special. The RSM was rated as a warrant officer²³¹ (Class I), and, as such, was normally the only one in his battalion. In the chain of command, he was the senior soldier (after the officers) in a battalion, and his major function was to provide a link between the officers and enlisted men. British soldiers regarded the RSM as "the symbol of discipline, the encyclopedia of information, the messiah of regulations, and the king-pin of the machinery of army life."²³²

The RSM fulfilled many important duties for a unit. He ensured that all orders given by the commanding officer were understood and carried out and he trained the NCOs in drill, military economy, regimental history, customs and tradition. He was also the person through which all complaints and suggestions flowed before moving up the chain of command. Because of these many responsibilities and duties, the man promoted to the rank of RSM, had to be an exemplary soldier. Originally, only the Basuto had a RSM, but after Kgosi Tshekedi and Bathoen visited the Middle East they complained that the Bechuana needed their own RSM to represent their special interests. In 1943, Kgari Sechele II was appointed the first RSM in the Bechuana AAPC. Other

²³⁰Colonel Clarke complained in 1943 that the A.G. sections did not have powers to issue orders regarding postings, transfers and promotions of officers, etc. They were expected to act in a purely advisory capacity. PRO DO35 1183/Y1069/1/1, Report on HCT in the Middle East, by C.N.A. Clarke, 31 July 1943.

²³¹An officer in the armed forces holding rank by virtue of a warrant and ranking above a noncommissioned officer and below a commissioned officer.

²³²MacDonald Hastings, "Regimental Sergeant Major," Picture Post (London), Vol. II No.I, 5 April 1941. The status of the RSM is much the same today.

promotions followed:²³³

R.S.M.	Kgari Sechele II (<u>Kgosi</u>)	E.C.	1980	BaKwena
R.S.M.	Molefi Pilane (<u>Kgosi</u>)	E.C.	2251	BaKgatla
R.S.M.	Molwa Sekgoma, M.B.E.	E.C.	6005	BaNgwato
R.S.M.	Rasebolai Kgamane, B.E.M.	E.C.	8567	BaNgwato
R.S.M.	Mookami Gaseitsiwe	E.C.	10252	BaNgwaketse

Chaplaincy Staff: Ordained Ministers

R.S.M.	Andrew Kgasas, L.M.S. at Kanye	E.C.	10467	Bangwaketse
R.S.M.	Odirile Mogwe, " " "	E.C.	10040	" " "
R.S.M.	Diaz Modukanele, " " "	E.C.	10039	" " "

All of these men from Bechuanaland stood above their peers in military bearing, discipline and skills. All were from important royal families back home.²³⁴ Because of their unique backgrounds, these men were extremely important both at home, and in the military. The diKgosi expected the RSMs to keep them informed of important issues regarding the AAPC's performance throughout the war.²³⁵ The military high command used them as instruments of social control. Thus, patterns of authority in the Protectorate and the military setting interacted on each other.

High ranking NCOs fulfilled many of the same functions as African elites within the colonial system in Bechuanaland. Military leaders recognized that these sergeants wielded exceptional power and influence. It was thought that African RSMs would ensure the continued enforcement of BaTswana customs and laws, such as the ban on hard liquor. It was also hoped that they would be useful in controlling "disruptive forces"

²³³BNA S 139/1/1, Newsletter to Middle East, March 1944 Issue. There was some competition among the three HCT services for service recognition. Basutoland was considered by the British the most advanced of the three territories during the war, and thus their soldiers were the first to be offered opportunities for advancement and additional training.

²³⁴Senior chiefs were appointed as RSMs so that their experience and advice might be available for the assistance of officers in caring for the men. PRO DO35 1183/Y1069/1/1, F73-85, Extract from "South Africa" dated 29 July 1944 on contribution of HCT troops in M.E.

²³⁵Because these men were literate, they wrote many letters to the diKgosi informing them about overall army conditions, injuries, and casualties. They also wrote letters for their comrades, who generally could not write, regarding family matters.

within the ranks.²³⁶ In the Middle East, as chief administrative assistants in the headquarters, their primary duty was liaison work. They accompanied A.G.10 on monthly inspection tours throughout the region, acting as interpreters, solving disciplinary problems, and administering to the men's spiritual needs. In addition, they travelled extensively on their own, visiting Pioneer and Dilution companies as often as they could. In general, the rank-and-file regarded them with respect and reverential awe (with a measure of fear mixed in).

CSMs were assigned to each company and were responsible for that Coy's overall performance. CSMs were expected to solve disciplinary problems before they escalated into embarrassing incidents which might be reported to headquarters. For example, CSM Serogola (1978 Coy) was given the responsibility of "influencing" the "unruly" Batawana doing salvage work in Cyrenaica.²³⁷ When company sergeants failed to provide the appropriate leadership, it was of great concern to army leaders. In 1945, problems with an African CSM nearly caused a racial incident:

This is still a most unhappy Coy...the regimentation of Major Stapleton means to them colour distinction and lack of consideration for Africans as equal human beings. In the Coy this is given point by the fact that the O/C having found CSM Marobela deficient of the parade bearing and "snap" to be expected of a British CSM, has not been using him as Sgt Maj, but merely sends for him for occasionally minor African matters and gets him to type. This has antagonized the Bechuana, for whatever the CSM is, he is African No. 1 and if he is denied standing in the Orderly Room, it is taken as an insult to them all, and in any case his own value as a disciplinary force fails.²³⁸

When Colonel Collins of A.G.10 heard about the above problem, he immediately visited the commander and conducted a "heart to heart" conversation on the importance of not antagonizing African NCOs. Major

²³⁶PRO DO35 1183/Y1069/1/1, Administrative Instructions for Units to Which AAPC Personnel are Attached. Rapid social changes were feared and considered undesirable by all concerned with the welfare of AAPC soldiers.

²³⁷PRO DO35 1183/Y1069/1/1, F190-233, Tour of Palestine and Syria in October 1943.

²³⁸PRO DO35 1183/Y1069/1/1, F99-121, Report on Visit in CMF during February, March and April 1945.

Stapleton agreed to make fuller use of the African CSM after further counseling. Pioneer Headquarters was so concerned about race relations that they ordered military commanders to make full use of African NCOs and use legitimate means to enhance their prestige with African Other Ranks (AORs). Maintaining this vital link between officers and enlisted was continually fostered at all levels of command. Thus, one of the main principles of Lugard's "indirect-rule" was applied within the military structure: that of delegation of authority.²³⁹ Military rank structures within the AAPC also reflects the continuing emphasis on class relationships within the British colonial system. For example, RSM Molwa Sekgoma's (BaNgwato) reputation as a soldier was so high that he was considered worthy of officer rank by his superiors. However, British army regulations prohibited HCT soldiers being awarded a King's commission.

IV. Morale and Military Discipline Among Bechuana Soldiers

Good morale and discipline was important for the continued performance of military duties vital to the successful completion of the war. There was also deep concern over the political ramifications of unrest among HCT soldiers. Several factors which directly impacted on morale and military discipline were constantly monitored by A.G.10 and Pioneer Headquarters. The most important of these were employment and training, welfare, recreation and educational opportunities, and communications with home.

The employment of troops and their training were of paramount importance to army officials. British forces were constantly on the move throughout North Africa and the Middle East between 1941 and 1943.

²³⁹The training and socialization of African NCOs provides us with an excellent example of colonial conditioning into dependency. As Ali Mazrui suggests, "qualities such as instant obedience, fierce regimental pride, reverence towards Britain and the British, a uniform which crackled with razor sharp starched creases and boots with toe-caps like black mirrors" were traditions which led to visible demarcations of hierarchy. Soldiers and Kinsmen in Uganda: The Making of a Military Ethnocracy (London, 1975), 173ff.

As a result, some AAPC units were rapidly losing their military proficiency and esprit de corps, especially in desert areas.²⁴⁰ Colonel Clarke noted in July 1943 that some AAPC companies were kept too long at heavy labor without periodic military training. He argued to his superiors that some military training was important to maintain productivity.²⁴¹ Perhaps even more importantly, if the AAPC did not get some respite their morale and discipline could permanently be affected.²⁴²

It was noted that prolonged idleness was equally demoralizing to soldiers. When two AAPC companies assigned previously to H.A.A. Regiments were sent to the African and Colonial Base Camp, they did nothing for 5 months because of indecision on how they were to be employed. This proved extremely detrimental to their morale, and they were eventually reintegrated into other regiments of H.A.A.

In 1942, Lt Col Edye, the commander of 64 Group wrote that a few of the men were "browned off" over conditions in the Middle East.²⁴³ It seemed the immediate causes of the soldier's discontent were staleness of work, mistaken idea of a few that they only enlisted for one year, and fear of another severe winter in Syria.²⁴⁴ Obviously, military life continued to be a struggle. As one soldier put it, "to be a soldier is

²⁴⁰Colonel Collins carried out an inspection of troops in Alexandria and in the area between that city and Benghazi in August 1943. He found disciplinary troubles had erupted because the troops had been kept unduly long in the desert without relief. Urgent measures were taken to ensure that the companies were removed to the Delta for rest and reassignment. See PRO DO35 1183/Y1069/1/1, F244-249, Report on HCT Troops in MEF, 14 August 1943.

²⁴¹Norman Meier would agree. He wrote: "Drill is not given primarily to train men to march so much as it is to train them to become *militarily functional, militarily effective*. It is essentially a means toward control. Drill promotes more than discipline; it may reflect intelligently directed training, excellent morale, high level of personnel, superior command, and good camp conditions. A highly motivated soldier, other things being equal, will learn faster and better." Military Psychology (NY: Harper & Brothers, 1943), 179.

²⁴²PRO DO35 1183/Y1069/1/1, Report on HCT in the Middle East, by C.N.A. Clarke, 31 July 1943.

²⁴³BNA S 136/7, Letter from Lt.Col Edye to Forsyth Thompson, 12 November 1942.

²⁴⁴Ibid.

to undergo trying times and many discomforts, i.e. the discomfort of never being alone, the unspeakable boredom, the discomfort of waiting and being packed and sent hither, and thither."²⁴⁵ However, some improvements were underway by the summer of 1942.

Most of the permanent camps now had stone huts with corrugated iron roofs and stoves to keep the men warm.²⁴⁶ After eleven companies stationed in the coldest regions of Syria complained about the mealie meal ration of 12 ozs. per man per day, the ration was increased to 14ozs.²⁴⁷ By May 1942, the men stationed in Syria and Palestine were allowed off work two full Sundays and a Wednesday per month.²⁴⁸ African leave camps were built at Beirut, Cairo and Jerusalem to provide a place for the men to rest and recoup from the arduous work.²⁴⁹ While at the camps, the men slept, wrote letters home, and swapped stories of desert campaigns with soldiers new to the war.²⁵⁰ Summer weather also offered new opportunities to enjoy the scenic attributes of the Middle East. Sea-bathing and historic tours were organized: "welfare officers and other ranks took the men on sight-seeing tours of the holy places of Palestine, the Nile Barrage, and the Delta".²⁵¹ Although these activities were popular with the men, organized sporting activities were perhaps the most influential in relieving the stress of military duties.

Love of sports was something the Regular Army encouraged, and it was considered by some senior officers to be essential to the morale of

²⁴⁵Private C.T.M. Mankazana, "Life of a Soldier," The Bantu World, 13 June 1942, 4.

²⁴⁶R.A.R. Bent, Ten Thousand Men, 24.

²⁴⁷PRO DO35 1183/Y1069/1/1, F288-293, Visit of Major Vollet to HCT Troops in Syria, March 1943.

²⁴⁸BNA DCS 30/1, Newsletter from Lieutenant R.L. Moffat, 1981 Coy, May 1942.

²⁴⁹The men were eligible to receive seven days local leave every three months but owing to the disposition of units, war operations, transport difficulties, etc. the men often did not want or could not be given the opportunity of taking this leave. PRO DO35 1183/Y1069/1/1, F258, Report of Visit of the Resident Commissioner of Basutoland to the HCT Troops in the M.E., 1943.

²⁵⁰"A.A.P. Corps," Mafeking Mail, 21 July 1944, Front.

²⁵¹Ibid.

the soldiers. This perception had its roots in the British Army of the Napoleonic era when sports as a recreational activity were considered important for the development of certain attributes necessary for leadership.²⁵² Many of the officers of the British Army at the beginning of the First World War came from a public school background, and in those schools great emphasis was placed on the values taught by games, "such as cheerfulness, lack of rancour, manliness, and self-control."²⁵³ Sports were considered a "manly" activity requiring physical strength and stamina. As K. Thomas has argued, 'manly' sports were viewed as rehearsals of conflict, and as products of war organization.²⁵⁴ "Sports taught young men that violence was acceptable on the playing field as long as the rules were observed," according to Lynne Iglitzin.²⁵⁵ Because sports were energy-consuming, they were also thought to be a means of containing soldiers' overexuberant sex lives. During the Second World War, sport received equal attention from commanders.

The British High Command encouraged sports for several reasons. Sports kept the soldiers fit, involved competition and challenge, and kept them active and therefore less likely to dwell too much on their difficult situation. Sport was also seen as, "a refresher course in a set of values, not absolutely or universally accepted but none the less influential, and these values were of a sort to bolster compliance, stoicism, and even confidence."²⁵⁶ Sport was considered significant for developing a sense of "corporateness" or togetherness.²⁵⁷ As Anthony

²⁵²T. Sean Schulze, "The Effects of Culture on the Soldiers of the Western Front, 1914-1918" (Masters Paper, Indiana University, 1994), 18.

²⁵³Ibid, quoting J.G. Fuller, Troop Morale and Popular Culture in the British and Dominion Armies 1914-1918 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990).

²⁵⁴K. Thomas, "Work and Leisure in Pre-Industrial Society," Past and Present, Vol. 29, (1964), 53.

²⁵⁵Lynne Iglitzin, "War, Sex, Sports, and Masculinity," 68.

²⁵⁶Fuller, Troop Morale and Popular Culture in the British and Dominion Armies, 139.

²⁵⁷J.T. Corlett and M.M. Mokgwathi, "Sport in Botswana" in Eric Wagner, ed., Sport in Asia and Africa: A Comparative Handbook (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1989), 215-227. See also Eric Wagner, "Sport in Revolutionary Societies: Cuba and Nicaragua," in Joseph L Arbena, ed.,

Clayton explains, "sport reflected pride in the membership of a military unit whose standards must not be betrayed."²⁵⁸ Thus, competitive team sport fostered social cohesion and group unity, reinforcing the sense of solidarity of companies from which opposing players were drawn.

For the soldiers, sports were a way to relax and blow off steam. W.R. Nasson noted in his study of African transport workers in the Anglo-Boer War, "recreation and entertainment came to occupy an extremely important space in transport rider's lives, lending vibrancy and rich colour to war experiences, and offering ritual consolation from, and defences against, the hazards, tensions, and uncertainties of wartime living."²⁵⁹ BaTswana soldiers too enjoyed the playful comraderie and consolation associated with team sports. Some of the men had participated in sports back home and were local legends; others learned to play at the many camps.²⁶⁰ Outdoor games, especially tug-of-war and football, were the most popular forms of physical recreation.²⁶¹ On Christmas Day and Boxing Day, football league matches were organized between East Africans, West Africans and men from the HCT. Competitions were also held against European teams.²⁶² Games offered prestige and

Sport and Society in Latin America (Wesport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1988), 113-36.

²⁵⁸Anthony Clayton, "Sport and African Soldiers: The Military Diffusion of Western Sport throughout Sub-Saharan Africa" in Sport in Africa: Essays in Social History eds. William J. Baker and James A. Mangan (New York and London: Africana Publishing Company, 1987), 114.

²⁵⁹W.R. Nasson, "Moving Lord Kitchener: Black Military Transport and Supply Work in the South African War, 1899-1902, with particular reference to the Cape Colony," Journal of Southern African Studies, Vol. II, No. 1, (October 1984), 40.

²⁶⁰"Serowe Football," Mafeking Mail, 6 July 1945, 3.

²⁶¹Soccer was popular among British and AAPC soldiers. Matches pitting the South African Springboks, British teams, and colonials were popular. Great ceremony accompanied the end-of-season playoffs. In March 1944, the Bechuana Drum and Bugle Band played to a crowd of 18,000 soldiers at the Alamein Club, Cairo during a match between the Springboks and New Zealanders. PRO DO35 1183/Y1069/1/1, F91-98, Middle East News, March 1944.

²⁶²Veteran Selelo Bogatsie was a "center forward" when he played the "London Cats". Interview by author, Tape Recording, Tlokweng, 14 July 1994; Veteran Jacob Marapi recalls that, "1978 Coy had a good football team, and it played teams of white soldiers as well as Kenyans, Basuto, and Swazis". Interview with Barry Morton, 25 November 1993, Note 73, Samedupe.

prizes for victory. The Pioneer Corps organized a Representative International Challenge Cup competition, and in a final at Ancona in July 1945, Swaziland beat Basutoland by three goals to one.²⁶³ Many of the veterans I interviewed could remember their football nicknames: B.R. Baletloa, "Bread and Butter"; Selelo Bogatsie, "American Bomber"; and Trouble Gaborone, "Spitfire". BaTswana men on the playing field had acquired new identities associated with war-time conditions. Football was remembered as one of the "highlights" of military service by nearly all veterans.

Leisure activities were fully embedded in the workplace, not divorced from but intimately associated with the laboring cycle. With labor duties characteristically irregular, the soldiers used intermittent periods of free time for recreational activities. Some forms of recreation that African soldiers sought were not sanctioned by army authorities, that is brothels and prostitutes. As far as military policy was concerned, there were two schools of thought in the Middle East regarding brothels. One was that properly inspected and officially-recognized brothels should be permitted, and the other that they should not.²⁶⁴ The argument of the latter position was as follows:

Although brothels may be regularly inspected, immunity from disease cannot be guaranteed. If there are no officially recognized brothels fewer women are encountered, the men are not officially encouraged to seek women, and infection with venereal disease is not likely to be greater. By countenancing brothels, men are in fact encouraged to use them.²⁶⁵

Despite the many criticisms against government sponsored brothels, veterans allege they existed.²⁶⁶ Old soldiers vividly describe clandestine visits to local women as well as "scheduled" trips to town

²⁶³E.P. van Oudtshoorn, "Swazi Regiments of the African Pioneer Corps in the War 1941-45," Public Records Office, DO35/40 71.

²⁶⁴BNA S 137/1/3, Confidential note from Major Redseth after Visit to M.E. in 1942.

²⁶⁵Ibid.

²⁶⁶Selawe Sawete, interview by Barry Morton, 10 November 1993, Note 31, Maplapaneng and Jacob Marapi, 25 November 1993, Note 73, Samedupe. For an interesting discussion of sex and war see Lynne Iglitzin, "War, Sex, Sports, and Masculinity," 66-67.

for the purpose of sexual liaisons. Reid Maruping remembers that Arab women sold themselves for 4/-.²⁶⁷ Others say the price varied, and that money to visit women was not a problem for most soldiers.²⁶⁸

In June 1942, the issue of brothels received additional attention when a BaTswana sergeant was inadvertently shot to death in an altercation which occurred at a brothel in the Middle East.²⁶⁹ Several persons were arrested in connection with the event and a Court of Inquiry was held.²⁷⁰ In general, officials tried to ignore the question of brothels as this note from the Gaborone District Commissioner's office signifies, [Upon notification of the above event] "Personally, I would be inclined to consider 'the less said, the better'".²⁷¹ Company commanders in the Middle East usually set policy on brothel visitation based on local conditions, and their estimation of the threat of disease or violence.

Military leaders also discouraged the sale and consumption of hard liquor.²⁷² In 1944, when word reached Kgosi Tshekedi Khama that liquor was freely flowing in 1985 and 1986 Coys, he wrote officials a scathing letter. He criticized the army for promoting behavior that would lead to addictions which would later cause problems in Bechuanaland. He requested that the military authorities ensure that "no strong drink be brought into the camps of the BaNgwato companies".²⁷³ In response, Colonel Walker stated that it was an "order in the Middle East that

²⁶⁷Interview with Barry Morton, 12 November 1993, Note 29, Matlapaneng.

²⁶⁸Mahoko "Ramakao" Samosipa, interview by Barry Morton, 5 November 1993, Note 28.

²⁶⁹BNA DCG 3/3, Notice from O/C in charge of records, Bechuanaland Depot, AAPC, 18 June 1942 regarding Sgt William K. (E.C. 3148).

²⁷⁰I did not find a record of the proceedings. I believe they may still be considered "classified information".

²⁷¹Ibid.

²⁷²British soldiers consumed healthy quantities of alcohol but colonial soldiers were generally forbidden "spirits". This was in line with colonial policy in Bechuanaland.

²⁷³BNA S 137/1/6, Letter from TK to the District Commissioner, Serowe, on 11 December 1944, regarding the sale of liquor to BaNgwato troops in Italy, Syria and Egypt.

under no circumstances may members of the APC be sold spirits."²⁷⁴ Subsequently, when the sale of "Arak"²⁷⁵ by Arabs to Africans at the Jerusalem leave camp became a problem, the O/C instituted severe disciplinary measures. Men who were found in possession of liquor or were intoxicated, were placed in the guard room for the duration of their leave. It should come as no surprise that the policy against the sale of liquor could not be enforced outside military camps however, and African soldiers drank hard spirits in the military clubs and local bars in towns.

Contrary to the ban on hard liquor, a ban on beer was seen as a factor which might weaken the soldier's morale and cause great resentment.²⁷⁶ Indeed, beer provided sustenance and Africans brewed their own beer when given the supplies by army officials. Major Germond, A.G. 10, recommended that the ration of mealie meal be increased in order that the soldiers could make their own African beer. If the proper grain could not be supplied, it was suggested that they be allowed to buy and drink European bottled beer which was strictly rationed to several bottles a week.²⁷⁷ Colonel Walker explained the difference in policy:

It is hoped very much that Chief Tshekedi does not take exception to this [sale of beer] for it is very strongly urged that the sale of mild beer is a very effective deterrent to the men going elsewhere and buying liquor far more dangerous. Further, we are of the opinion that the high morale of the troops is helped by encouraging the men to drink his glass of beer and talk to his friends in his own Canteen instead of wandering off these long evenings on a visit to the 'local'.²⁷⁸

Recreation was thus an important form of social bonding, but there were also other important factors considered vital for the maintenance of

²⁷⁴BNA S 137/1/6, Letter from Lt.Col. Walker, AAG to Commander 203 MilMiss, Pretoria, 10 January 1945.

²⁷⁵Arak is a strong clear spirit distilled from potatoes, turnips or other available vegetables. It is made throughout the Middle East.

²⁷⁶PRO DO35 1183/Y1069/1/1, F15, Notation on Alcohol, Staff Study on Basuto and Bechuana Soldiers, 9 November 1945.

²⁷⁷Ibid.

²⁷⁸BNA S 137/1/6, Letter from Lt. Col Walker, AAG, to Commander 203 MilMiss, Pretoria, 10 January 1945.

AAPC morale and discipline. Education and communications with family members back home, were two factors which received enormous attention by military authorities throughout the war years.

From the very beginning, educational deficiencies were apparent within the AAPC. There was a continuing demand for skilled workers, especially within administrative and medical fields. However, the British army lacked experience in developing education.²⁷⁹ It would take a movement from below to provide the impetus for change.

Army officials noted in 1942 that everywhere the troops were keen to learn to speak, read and write English. Military commanders, chaplains and officers of integrated regiments were confronted with the problem that there were no books, paper, chalkboards or other materials to support the soldiers in their studies, however. In fact, books were considered a most important and most urgently required item in companies.²⁸⁰ The call for help went out to the HCT that readers, bibles, novels, and newspapers were urgently needed in the Middle East. Lovedale Press was asked to send whatever they could furnish in the way of literature. Captain Sandilands, in a message to the Resident Commissioner, appealed to church and colonial organizations:

Books comprise ninety per cent of welfare...It is the many small things which make up the general contentedness and efficiency, or the reverse, of the troops".²⁸¹

Books slowly trickled to the Middle East via every available channel. Nevertheless, there was still no organized scheme for education, no

²⁷⁹Education in the British Regular Army was considered secondary to military pursuits. In 1942, two main systems of education were operating: The War-time Education Scheme and the Army Bureau of Current Affairs. The first was a voluntary system of adult education which focused on teaching the humanities, the utilities, and arts and crafts. The Army suffered from a shortage of teachers and the apparatus for systematic education. W.E. Williams, "Education in the Army," The Political Quarterly Vol. XIII, Nos.1-4 (London, 1942), 248-264.

²⁸⁰Reverend Sandilands worked tirelessly on getting Lovedale and others to send English readers, stories and bibles to the Middle East. BNA S 141/3/1.

²⁸¹BNA S 141/3/1, Letter from Sandilands to Mr. Forsyth Thompson, 17 September 1942.

educational staff allotted to the companies and no efficient method of distributing text books and equipment. During the early years, learning in the army was generally an individual matter.

Prior to 1943, the only official source of educational information was the Army Bureau of Current Affairs (A.B.C.A.). The Bureau's task was to issue memoranda on questions of general interest, which were circulated among the troops.²⁸² Company officers were expected to facilitate and guide discussions on current affairs.²⁸³ These discussions were sometimes beyond the comprehension of HCT troops, but Colonel Clarke noted on his visit to the Middle East in 1943 that these discussions were having an important, unexpected side effect:

The men are showing keen interest in current affairs particularly in the general progress of the war and plans for the post-war world. They are less conservative than when they left their homes and their minds are open to progressive ideas. They are particularly interested in what is going to be done for them and for their countries at the end of the war. It will, I think, be found that on their return many of them will be more critical of defects that may exist in the administration of their countries will want to have the opportunity for a greater say in the management of local affairs. Many have heard of the Atlantic Charter and the Beveridge Report and want to know to what extent the principles underlying these statements of policy are to be applied in their own countries.²⁸⁴

Col Clarke's observation did not go unnoticed at Pioneer Headquarters. Organized educational work amongst the troops was regarded by some as a necessary component of army welfare programs. According to their philosophy, "history had proved that education turns most men into better soldiers. On the other hand it was recognized that education

²⁸²PRO DO35 1183/Y1069/1/1, F254, Report on Visit of the Resident Commissioner of Basutoland to the HCT Troops Serving in the Middle East, May-July, 1943. The purpose of the A.B.C.A. was to "dispel the soldier's ignorance, bewilderment or indignation through weekly discussions." W.E. Williams, "Education in the Army," The Political Quarterly, 257.

²⁸³Periodically, special "current affairs" topics were printed on items of interest solely aimed at Africans, i.e. "The Development of African Agriculture in the Bechuanaland Protectorate". These were highly propagandist in nature and often promised aid after the war which never materialized. See BNA S 141/3/2, Copy of Article.

²⁸⁴BNA S 141/3/2, Report of Visit of Resident Commissioner, Basutoland, to HCT in Middle East 27 May to 20 July 1943.

might have some unsettling effects".²⁸⁵ Amongst older army officers, there was a belief that the uneducated made the best, obedient soldiers.²⁸⁶ The controversy over education thus continued. Those who advocated some form of literacy education for African soldiers eventually won the battle. However, the type of education envisioned for the AAPC was one designed to direct them "into valuable channels".²⁸⁷

In June 1943, a formal education plan was developed under the direction of the Army Educational Corps with the following objectives:

- 1) to improve the efficiency of the soldiers²⁸⁸;
- 2) to assist in maintaining their morale as the monotony of their work combined with the increasing time they had been away from their homes was adversely effecting performance;
- 3) to meet the wishes of the Governments of the Territories²⁸⁹;
- 4) to meet the desires if the men themselves.

In general, the type of education which was recommended was that which would improve the men as soldiers and instill conceptions of citizenship which would be of value upon demobilization.

Voluntary education classes had already been formed in certain Coys: regular classes were found to be held only in the companies of 64 Bechuana Group.²⁹⁰ Under the new scheme, selected British officers were

²⁸⁵The principle of trusteeship for African peoples presupposed a gradual development of their social consciousness and sense of responsibility. It was considered important that any army educational scheme incorporate civic education. BNA S 141/3/2, Letter from Major J.W. Ackward, African Educational Pool, to Resident Commissioner of Bechuanaland, dated 30 May 1944.

²⁸⁶Whether the African soldiers should or should not receive literary training was fiercely argued and debated by most British, just as the recruitment of massive numbers of Africans into the British armed forces had been debated. W.E. Williams, "Education in the Army," The Political Quarterly, 259.

²⁸⁷PRO DO 1183/Y1069/1/1, F280, Notes on meeting held in the office of DD of O & PS (CT) on 28 June, 1943 to consider education for the HCT.

²⁸⁸Walter Rodney would argue that educational policies were designed to "pacify" soldiers with limited and controlled access to educational materials selected by the colonial power. Educational efforts, according to Rodney, were never altruistically for the advancement of Africans. "Educating the African," in Historical Problems of Imperial Africa, Robert Collins, ed., 191.

²⁸⁹A conference on education was held by the High Commissioner at Johannesburg in September 1942. It specifically noted the importance of education for AAPC soldiers after demobilization. BNA S 141/3/1, File on Education and AAPC.

²⁹⁰PRO DO35 1183/Y1069/1/1, F288-293, Visit of Major Vollet to HCT Troops in Syria, March 1943.

ordered to undergo training in educational work. African teachers within the ranks of the AAPC were solicited for the job of educational instructors and they also attended an intensive five week long teachers course organized by GHQ Army Educational Corps (A.E.C.).²⁹¹ When trained, the British officers and African instructors were distributed among the various companies to the best advantage under the direction of the senior education officer.²⁹² By 1944, each company (Pioneer and "Dilution") had one Sergeant Instructor (educational) on staff. Courses were held in most Pioneer Coys for the training of part-time assistants. The company commanders were directed to provide, at a minimum, one hour per week for educational training. Primary emphasis was placed on literacy training, and African instructors taught English and SeTswana.²⁹³ Class sizes ranged from 20-130 per Coy, about 70 being average.²⁹⁴ In quite a number of cases, men who previously were unable to read or write, were doing quite well within a period of three months.²⁹⁵ Blue "E" badges were awarded to those who successfully passed literacy exams.²⁹⁶ In 1945 there was an effort to gain approval from the Director of Education at Mafeking to equate examinations from the Pioneer Corps with those held in the Protectorate, but it is unclear whether this was endorsed before demobilization.

²⁹¹In a way, the new program probably was most beneficial to those who were already semi-literate. They received further advanced training in literacy so they could become instructors. On the other hand, the illiterates who formed the biggest majority of the AAPC had to be content with basic lessons offered at Coy level.

²⁹²Complete educational plan is in BNA S 141/3/1.

²⁹³A complete syllabus was written by H.G. Clarke, Director of Education, Mafeking for HCT troops. Subjects included on the syllabus were: English, Reading, Handwriting, Arithmetic, Health and Geography. BNA S 141/3/1, Syllabus for Africans of the AAPC (Bechuana Companies), 18 January 1943.

²⁹⁴BNA S 141/3/4, Education in HCT Units. Appendix B.

²⁹⁵"A.A.P. Corps," Mafeking Mail, 18 August 1944, Front.

²⁹⁶It was anticipated that only 4-5 per Coy would qualify, but the keenness was such that 20-30 per Coy were passing. "E" on the patch stood for English-speaking. BNA S 141/3/4, Report on Education in MEF, Appendix B. (Note: O.J.E. Shiroya noted in his study of Kenyan soldiers that ex-askaris believed this patch was given to only a few who were privy to British secret war aims. Kenya and WWII, 46.)

Quite a few veterans admitted that they did not attend classes, however, because of time constraints, lack of classes, and fatigue. The most successful education program was at the HCT wing at headquarters where classes were taught every morning in an educational facility built especially for Africans. An official report on army education noted that many older men were not supportive of British educational efforts, but there were a few who wanted to improve their status within the army.²⁹⁷ Private Abel wrote home about his English training:

We greet you, we are all very well here in the Middle East and would be pleased to know that you chaps are well too. I strongly advise you fellows to come up to the Middle East to see for yourselves how we are enjoying it. What I am going to tell you in this letter isn't a lie or leg-pulling, it's the simple truth and what you will find when you reach the Middle East. Listen to this a while:

I joined the army in 1941 and after my enlistment for a while I was dissatisfied with things but today I wish I had brought my senior brother "Ntja" with me. Today we are gaining real and valuable experience besides acquiring wisdom. When I joined the Army, I was a fully grown man, I was 47 years of age and could not even read or write, now, be frank and unbiased, isn't my writing just wonderful in this letter? Why it looks just like an Englishman's writing. As for speaking English, you must hear me to believe me. Considering the age of some of our chaps here you'd be amazed at the improvement they show now; they are just as competent as the younger fellows and are actually beating the younger men as far as girls are concerned...

Just as a sample of how I have mastered the English language listen to this: "I am Forty Eight Years Old Boys." Sgn Pte E.J. Abel²⁹⁸

Operational duties and the stress on mobility meant that many soldiers did not have the time for regular classroom work.²⁹⁹ For those men, it was necessary to provide books and encourage them to work individually as much as possible. Reverend Sandilands believed that education would alleviate the boredom associated with certain types of army work:

²⁹⁷Ibid.

²⁹⁸Letter from the Middle East by Pte E.J. Abel, in Michael Crowder Papers, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, Box 16.

²⁹⁹Many of the veterans I interviewed said they did not have time for education classes in the army. The most successful education program was at the HCT wing at Hdqs where classes were taught every morning in an educational facility.

In the fairly monotonous work of guarding, and the fair amount of leisure it gives, books are a supremely effective and useful form of welfare, and will make them better soldiers, and better civilians when they come back to Bechuanaland.³⁰⁰

After 1945, the interest in education dwindled as the men became anxious to return home.

News from home was another important factor in maintaining the morale of the troops. It was a universal complaint that wives, relations and friends did not write often enough to their men in the Middle East. In 1944, this appeal was published in the Mafeking Mail:

Please receive my letter in which I explain that I would like you to let me know how you are getting on. As for us at this end, we are keeping quite well. I should be pleased if you would send me your addresses so that I can continue to correspond with you till I return home. I am anxious about the news and that is what I am particularly after. When you write to me, please write in my home language. All members of the African Pioneer Corps are greeting you. May God be with you.³⁰¹

Army officials tried to set up a system which made letter writing easier for those at home and for the soldiers. Preprinted postcards with simple messages such as "I have received my allotment" were made available to the wives. Directions on how to address letters were posted at kgotla and printed in the newspapers. However, there were many problems. Many of the men's relations could not read or write. Letters took a long time to reach the soldiers. Air Mail letters usually took a fortnight.³⁰²

People at home did not realize the impact of their letters according to their officers. Colonel Clarke stated that, "letters or the lack of them have a far-reaching effect on the morale of the men".³⁰³ Soldiers often complained through their RSMS and CSMS that they were not receiving news from home. When they did receive letters from their

³⁰⁰BNA S 141/3/1, Letter from Rev. Sandilands to Forsyth Thompson, 20 October 1942.

³⁰¹Mafeking Mail, 27 October 1944, letter from P. Sethabapudi.

³⁰²BNA S 133/2/1, Newsletters from A.A.P.C. Coys in M.E., 1942-44.

³⁰³PRO DO35 1183/Y1069/1/1, F255, Report of Visit of the Resident Commissioner of Basutoland to the HCT Troops Serving in the Middle East, 1943.

families, the news was often over family matters, cattle or village politics. This caused great consternation among the men who were too far away to solve problems in Bechuanaland.

The HCT news supplement to Indhlovu was seen as a key factor in helping to maintain morale and discounting the many rumors of disastrous happenings in Bechuanaland.³⁰⁴ The SeTswana paper Naledi ya Batswana was first printed in 1945 and served much the same purpose.³⁰⁵ Once in operation, the paper dedicated many articles to home news that was of interest to the soldiers. Naledi was circulated among AAPC companies through the efforts of A.G.10.³⁰⁶ The paper was paid for out of the African Gifts and Comfort Fund.

Although these efforts had some influence in maintaining high morale and military discipline among AAPC soldiers, as the war dragged on for over four years there were signs of growing discontentment. The "social experiment" of amalgamating British and African troops had some unforeseen consequences.

The policy of dilution was very controversial and important historically because it challenged preconceived notions (held by the British in southern Africa) of the role of Africans in warfare prior to 1941.³⁰⁷ The break in British military "tradition" also raised the spectre of old fears about African soldiers fighting on European soil.

³⁰⁴Ibid. According to Col Clarke, some letters contained inaccurate, depressing accounts of conditions back in Bechuanaland. Rumors of great famine, crop failures, and cattle deaths naturally spread rapidly among the troops. Indhlovu was an official publication of the Native Affairs Dept of the Union Government.

³⁰⁵BNA S 129/1/1, Newspaper "Naledi ya Batswana" (Star of the Bechuana): War News Supplement to Middle East. Impetus for the paper was to open lines of communication and as a form of adult education for residents of the Protectorate. It featured a special weekly war news summary and articles reproduced from "Indhlovu".

³⁰⁶"Indhlovu" was discontinued by the end of 1945. "Naledi" was sent to the troops instead. This was stopped in January 1946. BNA S 129/1/2, "Naledi ya Batswana".

³⁰⁷Great Britain was not alone. General Walter Bedell Smith, Eisenhower's Chief of Staff, objected to the use of blacks in combat capacities. General Patton, who had no good words for any black unit, thought blacks lacked the reflexes for armored combat. Nalty, Strength for the Fight, 176-177.

Upon reflection, several points emerge which made dilution in World War

Two a key turning point in southern African military history:

- 1) Dilution violated a perceived historical precedent for only using Africans as auxiliary troops. For the first time, official sanction was given for military roles other than strictly labor.

- 2) Dilution changed working relationships within the military structure. Africans now composed whole companies under the direction of only a few white officers and NCOs. African NCOs were given increased responsibilities within the system. Winning the war became a team effort.

- 3) Dilution challenged colonial attitudes regarding "traditional" Africans and their ability to cope with Western Civilization and modern warfare. BaTswana soldiers of the AAPC performed their duties when given the proper training and adapted exceedingly well to each new war-time situation.

Despite the changes in British policy, old attitudes and fears regarding the employment of African soldiers remained and ultimately caused the abandonment of the policy. Several factors inhibiting the total success of the policy were:

- 1) Paternalistic colonial attitudes which focused on what has been termed the "unspoiled African syndrome". The reluctance on the part of colonial officials to expose Protectorate Africans to the horrors of the front-line meant they were limited in their capacities to aid the British war effort. Segregation interfered with the optimal training and assignment of Africans. Poor performance was almost never attributed to the quality of the leaders, most of whom were white. Resentment over non-combatant status affected recruiting in the Protectorate and attitudes of the soldiers towards their British counterparts.

- 2) Fears about the effects of close working relationships between British BORS and African ORs resulted in discriminatory policies. The drawing of distinct racial boundaries as regards military facilities, recreation and welfare meant that the normal military bonding which occurs between soldiers in war was never achieved on a large scale. Racial segregation prevented the kind of widespread association that might have fostered mutual understanding and tolerance. Consequently, morale deteriorated over time.

- 3) The violation of contractual agreements regarding length of service and areas of employment in 1945 caused great resentment among all HCT soldiers. Resistance took the form of strikes, increased violence against whites, and in some cases mutinies.

Several factors which will be discussed in the next chapter led army leaders to express serious concerns about military productivity: the employment of AAPC soldiers in Europe and the arduous work of the Italian campaigns, the lack of a workable leave scheme, and demobilization problems following the armistice in Europe. As with

black African soldiers in the French army in 1944, British forces would again be "whitened" as the Allied victory drew nearer.

Chapter 6: The AAPC in Europe and Demobilization

Overview:

The effects of war upon participants depend very much on its duration. The whole problem of morale, from the military angle, changes with the prolongation of the war.¹ Soldiers become less resilient, both physically and mentally, over long periods. This does not mean that a long war affects all individuals alike, but often such drastic experiences involve fundamental social changes. According to Modise Thebe, "soldiering is tough and makes you a tough man".² Despite the fact that the men were indeed "tough", official records and personal testimony reflect a growing awareness that war was having a negative impact. Oualenna Lekalake remembers that "all the men in my company were worried about the war going on too long".³ The physical demands of military labor were taking a toll. Although the men, for the most part, were in excellent physical condition⁴ and continued to perform great feats of strength and endurance, the work in the Middle East was draining and monotonous. "I became very tired," recalls Mapiri Khuxamo.⁵ Officials could do little to alleviate the drudgery of military labor in the Middle East prior to 1943, but new opportunities were opening up for Africans as the complexion of war changed. These were a source of both excitement and trepidation.

By 1943, the North African campaigns were drawing to a close. The Americans and the British First Army defeated the last German and Italian forces in Africa on 12 May. To mark the Empire's thankfulness

¹W.E. Hocking, Morale and its Enemies, 189.

²Modise Thebe, interview by author, Kumankwane, 15 July 1994.

³Oualenna Lekalake, interview by author, Kumankwane, 14 July 1994.

⁴Colonel Collins reported in mid-1943, "I found the men standing up well to the boredom and hardships of the soldier's life. Their travels, experiences and work have toughened them physically and broadened their minds." PRO DO35 1183/Y1069/1/1 F253, Report of Visit of the Resident Commissioner of Basutoland to the HCT troops serving in Middle East, May-June 1943.

⁵Mapiri Khuxamo, Interview by Barry Morton, 9 October 1993, Note 46, Maun.

at the final destruction of all Axis forces in North Africa and his appreciation of the "magnificent endurance and valor of his troops," George VI arrived in North Africa in June, "to visit his soldiers and see the sites of their great victory".⁶ On United Nation's Day in Cairo, a parade of troops from all over the Empire, was led through the cheering streets by the Serowe Band decked out in leopard skins.⁷ In addition to these marvelous celebrations in which the BaTswana participated, there were also new honors. In recognition of their war efforts, the C-in-C Middle East recommended that the AAPC be redesignated the African Pioneer Corps (APC).⁸ This raised the status of the corps from an auxiliary arm of the British army to a fully recognized British unit.⁹ It essentially meant that labor was no longer thought of as the step-child of the British army, but a full fledged member of the family. According to CSM G. Kgolo, "the APC was now ready to continue serving their country and the Empire in whatever capacity that was needed".¹⁰

Two important events occurred in 1943 which breathed new life and vigor into the Pioneers Corps. The first was the British decision to employ African units in the upcoming Italian campaigns. At the Casablanca Conference between Prime Minister Churchill and President Roosevelt, it was decided that the next step would be the invasion of southern Europe. General Montgomery commanding the British Eighth Army,

⁶Brian Gray, Basuto Soldiers in Hitler's War (Maseru: Basutoland Government, 1953), 24.

⁷BNA S 139/1/1, Newsletter to M.E. Supplement to "Indlhovu" dated 20 October 1943.

⁸This was a special mark of favor for distinguished service. Brian Davis, The British Army in WWII, note bottom p. 13. The Warrant for the new title was signed by the King on 20 June 1944 and promulgated under Special Army Order 116/44. PRO DO35 1183/Y1069/21, Change of Title to African Pioneer Corps.

⁹Veteran Ephraim Molatlhwe from Gabane associated this event with the death of President Roosevelt. "When Truman became President, we were no longer "auxiliary" but promoted to APC." He did not remember why this was so, but it does reflect the importance attached to the removal of "auxiliary" from the AAPC title. Interview by Michael Taylor (Botswana National Museum), February 1994

¹⁰BNA S 137/1/6, Letter from CSM Kgolo G, 1968 Coy APC, 8 June 1944.

and General Patton, the U.S. Seventh Army, were leading the invasion. Thousands of vehicles, tanks, guns, and men were required for this huge undertaking, and BaTswana Pioneer and Dilution companies were needed to assist in essential preparations.

Prior to the invasion of Sicily in 1943, HCT labor companies were sent to Tripoli and Malta, as forward operating units for the assault force. BaTswana soldiers built camps, constructed roads and airfields, and loaded and off-loaded ships.¹¹ Orders were issued to move forward to Sicily; it would be the first time since WWI that soldiers from Bechuanaland would be deployed on the continent. One tragic event in May temporarily dampened BaTswana spirits. It was during preliminary operations for the Sicilian invasion, that 618 Basuto Pioneers perished as a result of their transport ship, *Erinpura*, being torpedoed and sunk by Germans in the Mediterranean.¹² It was the heaviest loss suffered by the HCT in the course of the war. Veteran Klaas Kapaletswe said "the loss of the Basuto ship did not make us [Bechuana] afraid. Death was everywhere, and thus I continued my duties operating the anti-aircraft gun".¹³ For the BaTswana soldiers who had once worked in the dangerous mines of the Rand, tragic accidents had been a major part in the life of black workers. As on the mines, the work continued apace as the Allied armies moved against enemy positions in Italy.

The second event which had a positive impact on the soldier's morale was the implementation of a home leave scheme. Military commanders realized that in addition to looking after the soldiers'

¹¹Rhodes-Wood, A War History of the Royal Pioneer Corps, 198.

¹²Brian Gray, Basuto Soldiers, 26ff. The "Erinpura" went down in high seas sometime around 8 p.m. on 1 May 1943. For an account of the raid and the many acts of bravery by Basuto soldiers see Chapter VII.

¹³He remembers that his troopship had been bombed and sunk shortly after arriving in the Middle East and he later "saw his ship under water." Interview by author, 16 July 1994. Veteran Legatalle Moeng also had a close call with German fighter pilots. His ship was attacked but they managed to shoot down the plane before it got his. He knew of three ships that were sunk because of enemy fighters. Interview by author, Odi, 18 July 1994.

welfare in theater, it was also important in order to combat fatigue, to provide rest and relaxation away from the war. The BaTswana were getting homesick, particularly those who had been serving in the Middle East for over two years.¹⁴ In June 1943, Colonel Clarke urged British army leaders to consider a leave scheme which would allow the HCT soldiers to go home for a short respite.¹⁵ He stressed that going home would have a secondary benefit of stopping rumors about declining economic conditions in the Protectorate. Pressure for a leave scheme was also forthcoming from the Protectorate. Colonial officials were aware that the troops in the Middle East were concerned about over-recruiting in the Protectorate with the potential result that not enough men would be left to carry on essential plowing and other male activities, and that their families were suffering.¹⁶ According to Clarke, "going home would reassure them that their women and children were looked after, and that the men need not be anxious about their welfare". Military authorities reluctantly (because of manpower shortages and projected shipping difficulties) granted home leave to designated BaTswana companies on an incremental basis.¹⁷ The first APC leave draft arrived in South Africa on 3 September 1944.¹⁸ Permanently getting the BaTswana home after the war became the next military hurdle.

Demobilization was fraught with as many problems as recruitment had

¹⁴PRO DO35 1183/Y1069/1/1 F266 also F257, Letter on Leave for AAPC Troops, C.N.A. Clarke, 31 July 1943.

¹⁵The South African and Cape Coloured Corps had already been granted leave by South African military officials and there was some concern about reactions within the APC. Some of the East African troops were also returning home on leave. PRO DO35 1183/Y1069/1/1 F 268, Note on Leave, C.N.A. Clarke, 31 July 1943.

¹⁶Capt Sandilands reported this complaint to military authorities in November 1942. The commander of 64 Group Headquarters included it in a letter to Forsyth Thompson suggesting that the chiefs should send reassurances to the men that their families were ok. BNA S 136/7, Letter from Col Edye to Forsyth Thompson, 12 November 1942.

¹⁷There were many problems with initiating a leave scheme for the APC. Most prominent among these was the lack of shipping to get the men home. PRO DO 35 1184/Y1069/1/2 F174, War Office Cipher to C in C Middle East, 15 May 1945.

¹⁸PRO DO35 1183/Y1069/1/1, Note on Leave in MilMiss Top Secret Report dated 27 October 1944.

been in 1941. Military officials recognized that BaTswana soldiers had fulfilled their military commitments; they had stuck it out until Hitler's forces had been defeated. However, Germany's defeat did not automatically end British labor requirements. Demobilization was labor intensive, requiring many soldiers to stay on to remove and repair military equipment. Officials in Bechuanaland understood these requirements, but nonetheless demanded the immediate return of their troops. The APC was withdrawn from Europe and reassigned to duties in the Middle East while waiting transportation home. Subsequently, officials reported growing disillusionment and frequent disciplinary problems among APC soldiers during 1945 and 1946.¹⁹

¹⁹PRO DO 1183/Y1069/1/1 F99-121, Report on Visit in CMF in Feb-Mar 1945 by Colonel E. Collins.

I. The Pioneers go to Sicily and Italy with the Eighth Army

The British landings in Sicily at Syracuse and Pachino were successfully carried out on the morning of 10 July 1943. With the beach landing parties were fourteen companies of Pioneers and several Dilution Companies from Egypt.²⁰ The first Bechuana ashore were B. Troop of 209 H.A.A. Battery of 1972 (BaNgwato and BaKwena) Dilution, manning the big guns of the 73rd Regiment. They were to provide anti-aircraft cover for Syracuse.²¹ On How Beach, 1977 (BaNgwato) Smoke Coy also made a safe landing and began to set up their Haslar Smoke Production Unit in order to provide a screen for the safe landing of other assault craft.²² Despite the fact that the landings were accomplished in rough seas and German fighters were strafing the Allied troops, the BaTswana suffered no casualties in the initial landings. British assault forces quickly captured Syracuse and Pachino while secondary forces fortified the beachheads. The African Pioneers attached to the Beach Landing Groups were the first non-European units to begin work.

During the next several days, the Eighth Army proceeded to take control of the ports, airfields and nearby Sicilian cities. The Americans, who landed further west, were equally busy gaining their southern toe-hold on the continent. The BaTswana were indiscriminately attached to any Allied unit requiring labor whether they were British, New Zealanders, American, Canadian or South African.²³ The process was chaotic, but the work proceeded with great haste. The Pioneers were employed in a myriad of duties: unloading supplies from the ships,

²⁰Rhodes-Wood, A War History of the Royal Pioneer Corps, 198.

²¹R.A.R. Bent, Ten Thousand Men, 38; Rhodes-Wood, A War History of the Royal Pioneer Corps, 198-200.

²²Ibid.

²³R.A.R. Bent, Ten Thousand Men, 38ff. However, never was it the intention of military commanders to place the pioneers directly into combat situations. What emerges from both the archival and oral sources is that labor was so important to the forward movement of the Eighth Army that the Pioneers were frequently placed in proximity to the enemy strictly because of necessity. Never were the Pioneers required to face the enemy in hand to hand combat.

hauling vehicles, constructing roads, quarrying, building runways, setting up ammunition dumps, collecting the wounded and prisoners, and burying the dead.²⁴ To assist in this effort, ten Bechuana companies were brought over from the Middle East: 1966, 1967, 1968, 1979, 1981, 1990 (BaNgwato), 1970 and 1983 (BaNgwaketse), 1969 and 1980 (BaKwena) Coys.²⁵ Some of these companies were new and inexperienced, having been recruited and trained throughout 1942. None of them knew what they were in for, except that it was going to be very dangerous as battles frequently raged only a few hundred yards ahead. For the Pioneers from the HCT, it was a frightening experience to be under enemy fire for the first time.²⁶ Staff Sergeant Tsienyane Lebogang from Serowe described the landing in Sicily and his initial reaction to working under enemy fire:

We arrived in Sicily in July 1943 and landed at a place where there were no docks and marched about three miles to a camp. We had air raids; it was the first time we had seen them. After four raids we did not worry, but just carried on working, loading ammunition and singing. After this war the British must teach us to make aeroplanes.²⁷

Another of the few surviving accounts of those opening days was written by a Swazi Pioneer, CSM Mfunda Sukati. He wrote:

On shore, hell seemed to be let loose. Explosions seemed to be going off everywhere, and yet nothing seemed to be happening. We took cover right straight away. As an enemy plane came over from nowhere and opened his machine guns on us, we fell on the ground. It felt as though bullets must be hitting our men, as little puffs of dust rose through the ranks of the men lying prone. We proceeded to our Assembly Area, with mixed feelings of thrill and pride at being there, and a little fearsome of the unknown.²⁸

Contrary to British opinion at the time, official military reports

²⁴Rhodes-Wood, A War History of the Royal Pioneer Corps, 199.

²⁵PRO DO 35 1183/Y1069/1/1 F82-89, Staff Study: Bechuana as Soldiers in CMF, 14 October 1945.

²⁶According to Bent, 1969 (BaKwena) Coy's landing craft was driven out of Augusta harbor by enemy bombing on 13 July 1943. Ten Thousand Men, 39.

²⁷BNA S 133/2/2, Newsletter written by war correspondent Capt. Lister, dated 25 April 1945. Interview notes by author with EC 9116 SSgt Tsienyane Lebogang, summer 1994.

²⁸CSM Mfunda Sukati was in a Smoke Coy attached to the Fifth Army during the invasion. PRO DO35 1183/Y1069/32, Unpublished pamphlet, The Swazi Pioneers.

confirm that the Bechuana held up well under enemy bombing and machine gun fire on the beaches of Sicily.²⁹

Italian resistance in Sicily may not receive much merit in military history books, but there was plenty of action for the BaTswana anti-aircraft gun crews.³⁰ Enemy air raids darkened the skies day or night, and the H.A.A. regiments were kept continuously busy. The guns of 73rd regiment, manned by 1972 Bechuana Coy, claimed at least half of the enemy aircraft brought down over Syracuse during July, four confirmed, four probables and three badly damaged.³¹ Unfortunately, the BaTswana also suffered their first combat fatalities in Italy on 11 August. Five BaNgwato of 1967 Coy were killed and twenty-six wounded near Lentini airfield when enemy planes swept through their camps.³²

The push northwards along the Sicilian coast continued throughout August. Pioneer units were reassigned new duties as the battle lines moved. The work was gruelling. Twelve hour shifts were common; fifteen hour days taxed the men further.³³ The African Pioneers made a reputation for themselves, as they had done in North Africa and the Middle East. General Montgomery praised their determination and skill as the Sicilian campaigns drew to a close:

²⁹Ibid. See also PRO DO35 1183/Y1069/1/1 F88-90;F113-121, Report by Col. S.H. Walker after visit to CMF in March 1944. He wrote, "the Bechuana have proved themselves steady under fire". This was specifically mentioned because there existed among some staff officers certain reservations about the ability of Africans to perform under fire, believing that they were afraid of artillery bombardment. A confidential report issued in June 1940 regarding British soldiers under heavy enemy fire reported that 75% of the men reacted adversely to enemy shelling and were "jumpy". See Alistair Horne, Monty: The Lonely Leader (Great Britain: Macmillan, 1994), 184.

³⁰General Maxwell Taylor wrote, "We took the northwest corner of Sicily. It was a pleasure march...Nicest war I've ever been in!" and "Monty--he had a different problem--he was up against Germans." Nigel Hamilton, Monty: The Battles of Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery (New York: Random House, 1994), 180.

³¹R.A.R. Bent, Ten Thousand Men, 40.

³²R.A.R. Bent, Ten Thousand Men, 41.

³³During the battle of Sangro river, it was reported that one Bechuana Coy put in twenty-four hours solid to keep the tanks and lorries supplied with petrol. BNA S 133/2/1, Newsletters from AAPC: "BaKwena Soldiers in Italy" by military observer Capt Gray, dated 8 September 1944.

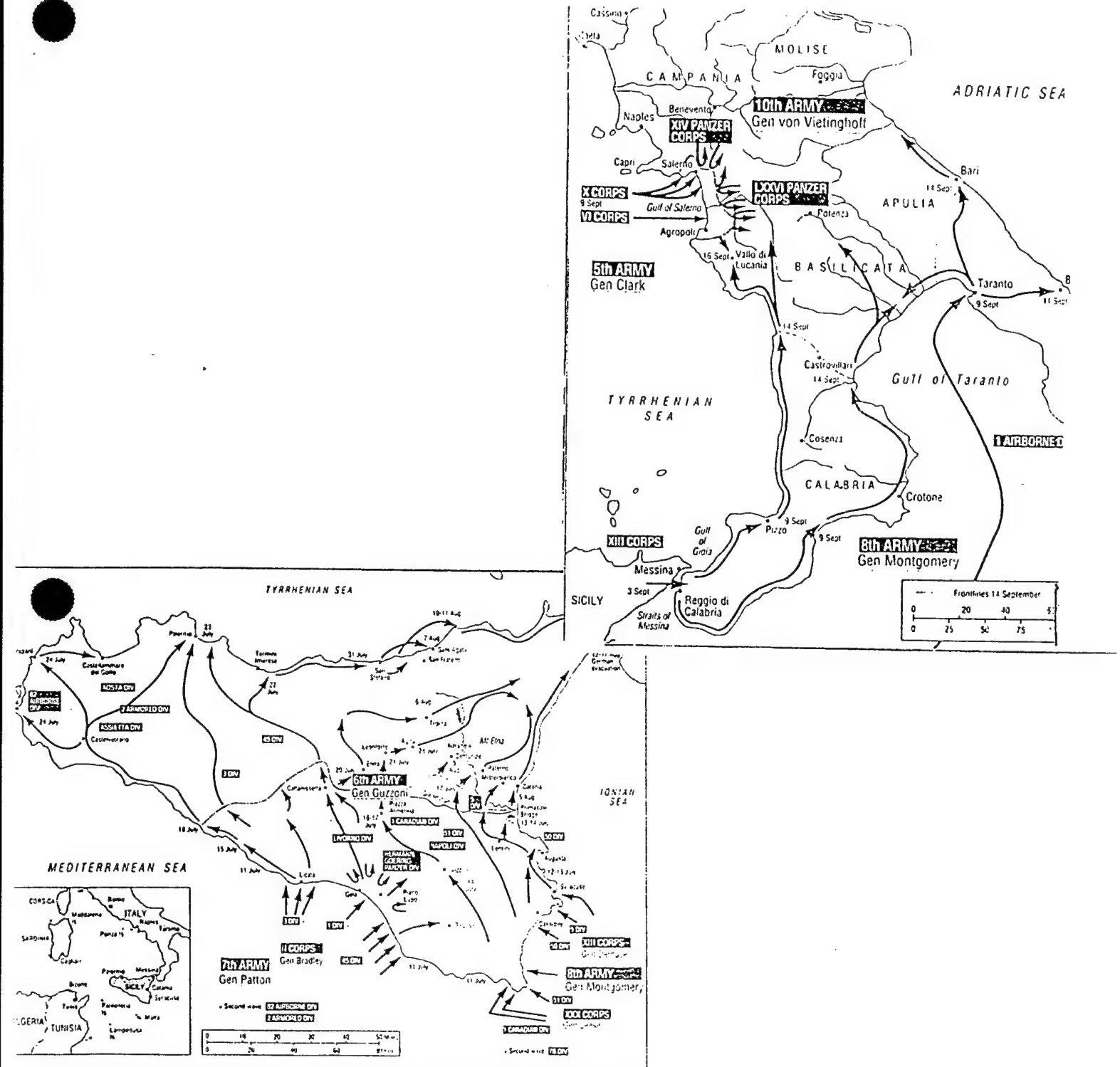
In these tremendous events, you, the soldiers of the Eighth Army, have played a very notable part. By our splendid fighting qualities and devotion to duty you have helped to change the whole course of the war.³⁴

Of course, Sicily was only the first step in a series of aggressive campaigns devoted to the elimination of Italy and Germany from the war. The Allied advance had been rapid because the Italian ground forces had offered little resistance in Sicily. In September, the Italians surrendered. The Eighth Army, again accompanied by Pioneers, crossed the narrow straight dividing Sicily and Italy on 9 September. They landed at Reggio di Calabria to begin offensive operations. The Americans, under the leadership of General Mark Clark, successfully landed at Salerno only to face severe German resistance.³⁵ Eighteen days later, the two forces met near Naples. The battles raged until June, 1944 to break through the mighty Adolf Hitler Line and hurl the enemy back beyond the Eternal City of Rome. Every mile or village won cost hundreds of lives, thousands of casualties, and took days to achieve. The Germans fought a relentless rearguard campaign all the way up the peninsula. The BaTswana Pioneer and Dilution companies comprised a small part of the Allied effort against the Germans, but their contribution to victory cannot be denied by those who study the prosecution of wars and understand the importance of logistics, labor, and supply.

³⁴Ibid., 42.

³⁵Basuto and Swazis were with the American amphibious forces. They unloaded the landing craft on Roger Beach and provided smoke cover. Brian Gray, Basuto Soldiers, 39; Rigg, The Swazi Pioneers, Unpublished Pamphlet, in PRO DO35 1183/1183/Y1069/32; BNA S 133/2/1, C.M.F. Newsletter, June 1944.

MAP OF ITALY AND SICILY



Source: Charles Messenger, The Chronological Atlas of World War Two (N.Y.: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1989), 148 and 206.

The invasion of Italy and the subsequent rapid move north caused another serious labor crisis for British army officials.³⁶ The problem was exacerbated by lengthening supply lines, the maintenance of previous military commitments, and the unique labor requirements of the Italian campaigns. By October, Eighth Army had only approximately half the Pioneer units under command that it had had in Sicily.³⁷ Several Pioneer and Dilution companies from the HCT had to remain in Sicily giving smoke protection at the ports, performing dock work and manning the guns, thus limiting the number of troops available for redeployment northward. Labor resources were thus stretched tighter and tighter. Compounding the problem was the heavy casualties suffered by the Allied forces as the slugging match continued on the ground. Further, British troops were being withdrawn from Italy to prepare for Operation Overlord.³⁸ Thirteen British Pioneer companies had returned home during December to prepare for the campaign in Western Europe.³⁹ In October 1943, General Montgomery complained that the Germans had twenty-four divisions in Italy, almost twice as many as the Allies, and easily supplied from Germany.⁴⁰ If they were to hold the ROME line without great difficulty, the Eighth Army needed infantry reinforcements.

For those companies which accompanied the Eighth Army northward, there were new responsibilities and increased workloads because of manpower shortages. The important ports of Brindisi, Taranto and Bari

³⁶As soon as it was possible, Italians were forced to join civilian Pioneer units to alleviate the severe labor shortages.

³⁷Rhodes-Wood, A War History of the Royal Pioneer Corps, 208.

³⁸At one point, the War Office considered using non-European Pioneer companies in Operation Overlord but due to manpower shortages this never happened. There may also have been policy limitations as this quote from a top secret note indicates, "The HCT troops are giving very satisfactory service in their present roles in Italy...this being so, and because of the difficult manpower problem, we propose that no restriction be placed on the use of these African native troops in Europe, except that none of them shall be brought to the U.K. to take part in any operation launched from this country." PRO DO35 1184/Y1069/1/2 F274 & 277, Top Secret Letter Regarding Service in Europe, War Office, 29 March and 8 April 1944.

³⁹Ibid., 214.

⁴⁰Nigel Hamilton, Monty, 189-190.

on the east coast needed to be protected, while at the same time, the never-ending labor tasks associated with the movements of large armies demanded attention. The unenviable task of prioritizing and directing labor fell to several Group commanders who competed fiercely for African labor services.⁴¹ Many companies were required to perform double duty. For example, 1977 and 1979 Coys performed smoke duties and also worked on dock labor daily. Also for the first time, the 87th H.A.A. Regiment was ordered to relieve British-manned field artillery guns to provide cover for infantry divisions of the British 10th Corps near Volturmo.⁴² The 87th supplied A.A. cover for the capture of three bridgeheads, and then their long-range salvoes successfully harassed enemy supply and communication lines. BaTswana soldiers were thus directly involved in ground operations against German field positions. These units suffered higher rates of casualties, but when ordered back to port duty by their commanders, the BaTswana were disappointed to be away from the front lines.

Other new duties performed by Pioneer units in Italy included bridging and portering. The first was accomplished under the direction of the British Royal Engineers. Pontoon, Inglis and Bailey bridges were carried by infantry divisions and corps bridge companies to span obstacles, such as rivers or ravines.⁴³ Pioneers were taught how to assemble bridges under the most severe conditions. Bechuana companies labored heavily to bridge the swollen Sangro River in November and December 1943 before hostilities slowed because of the onslaught of winter.⁴⁴ Yard by yard the Eighth Army bridgehead across the Sangro was

⁴¹61 Group directed the first Coys on landing. After 46 came 81 Group, then 18 and 19 Groups and they all directed Bechuana laborers during the campaign. R.A.R. Bent, Ten Thousand Men, 40.

⁴²Ibid., 49. The US 5th Army and the British 10th Corps under McCreery crossed the Volturmo River on 13 October 1943.

⁴³B. Davis, The British Army in WWII, 54-65.

⁴⁴Rhodes-Wood, History of the Pioneers, 210. There was bitter German resistance at the Sangro. See photo of 1980 (BaKwena), in Ten Thousand Men, carrying bridge girders. Because of their efforts, the 8th Army crossed the Sangro on 20 November.

extended until it was a mile and a half deep and seven miles wide.⁴⁵ The Germans overlooked the Sangro and its southern approaches from a high escarpment crowned by five villages. They were well dug in and the Pioneers were constantly in danger from sniper fire. General Montgomery wrote to General "Archie" Nye:

In spite of continuous rain and acres of mud I managed to get a good bridgehead over the SANGRO; the trouble was to get any tanks and supporting weapons over, as the river was in flood and low level bridges merely disappeared. I took a good few risks. Twice I pushed back to the river--once on my right, and once on my left. But we came again and refused to admit it couldn't be done. The troops were quite magnificent, and in the most foul conditions you can ever imagine; the SANGRO, normally, is about 80 feet wide, and it became swollen to 300 feet and rose several feet; the water was icy cold as heavy snow fell in the mountains where the river rises. Many were drowned. Eventually we succeeded.⁴⁶

At Frosinone, 1980 Bechuana Company manhandled Bailey bridge components 200 yards under shell fire so that the river crossing could be completed in time, an achievement which the Chief Engineer of XIII Corps considered so outstanding that he ordered the bridge, already named "Frosinone Bridge" to be renamed "Bechuana Bridge".⁴⁷ In May 1945, a BaNgwato Coy erected their first Pontoon Bailey Bridge across the River Po. Working in shifts in conjunction with Royal Engineers the company completed the job in thirty-six hours in spite of bad weather conditions, and finishing touches were still being put to the bridge as the first convoy crossed over.⁴⁸

Sappers and Pioneers on bridge duty often worked at night because of occasional shellfire. Progress was slow because small units of Germans, aided by terrain and booby traps, fought tenaciously to check

⁴⁵Nigel Hamilton, Monty, 192.

⁴⁶Ibid. Total casualties in the SANGRO battle were 113 officers, 1,650 Other Ranks--which Montgomery considered quite light for what was achieved.

⁴⁷BNA S 133/2/1, Newsletters from AAPC: "BaKwena Soldiers in Italy" by military observer Capt Gray, 8 September 1944; also Rhodes-Wood, A War History of the Royal Pioneer Corps, 228; news report in The Bantu World (23 June 1944), 5.

⁴⁸BNA S 133/2/2, Newsletter on bridging written by war correspondent Capt Lister, 1 May 1945. E.C. 13017, Sgt. L. Sebiri, from Serowe, was part of the BaNgwato crew who built the bridge over the Po.

the Allied advance and so give forces in the rear time to fall back. From their viewpoint, blocking bridges and roads effectively denied passage to a pursuing enemy. That is why the Italian campaign was very much a war of labor: it was the Sappers (and the Pioneers) who cleared the minefields, bulldozed the approaches, and pushed the Bailey bridges across the many rivers of the Italian countryside.⁴⁹

Porterage was also a new duty for HCT Pioneers in Italy, but essential because of the mountainous terrain. Not since the East African campaigns of World War One, did the British resort to the use of African manpower on such a scale. As the Allied forces captured each new German position hidden within the steep, rocky, roadless mountains of Italy, they had to stay there and hold it. Army logistics now faced a new crisis. How to supply these advance forces? It was decided that mules would be employed where the mountain tracks were wide enough for safe passage.⁵⁰ When even mules could not be used, Pioneers were tasked to do the hauling themselves with loads as much as 80 lbs per man.⁵¹ Some of the mountains took up to thirteen hours to climb.⁵² Pioneers moved the supplies up to the forward camps where British infantry regiments awaited their precious cargo (food, water and ammunition). On their way down the mountains, stretcher-bearers carried the wounded too badly hurt to make it down on their own. All this took place very close to enemy lines. CSM Mafunda Sakati narrates the story of a Swazi company assigned porterage duty near Salerno, Italy which provides us a glimpse of what all Pioneers must have endured:

[1991 Coy] was tasked to move ammunition, water, and food up the line. Precipitous country hampered their movements...yet they continued on their way. They were bringing supplies to the Grenadier Guards, Coldstreams and Scots, said our officer.

⁴⁹Many of the Sapper companies operating in Italy were Indian. See C. Trench, The Indian Army and the King's Enemies, 230-253.

⁵⁰The Basutos provided the bulk of the muleteers for this work. Brian Gray, Basuto Soldiers, 46-52.

⁵¹B. Gray, Basuto Soldier's in Hitler's War, 47.

⁵²PRO DO 35 1183/Y1069/32, Porterage described by CSM Mfunda Sukati in The Swazi Pioneers.

Silently, in single file, up steep slopes, down deep ravines, the convoy wound its way. The heavy boxes of ammunition were weighing down the now weary men. A most dreadful moaning was heard, pierced by spasmodic shrieks of terror--the sound echoed and reechoed against the mountains looming on either side of us. On and on we went. It was getting lighter now, and enemy mortar fire was concentrated on our path...we closed our eyes, but still the flashes pierced through the greyness; everyone took cover. Gradually we reformed...up and up we went, smoke circled up from the various spots where the battle had just been raging; a few Guardsmen lay in the stillness of death. We had made it. A quiet smoke and talk, and down back to the R.A.P., carrying wounded, assisting others who refused to be carried. One man with five machine gun bullets through his legs and thighs, insisted on walking.⁵³

Many historical accounts of the Italian campaigns mention the heroic work done by HCT porters. Brian Gray's official history of the Basuto Pioneers dedicates a whole chapter to the important role of these men who kept the Allied forces supplied on the mountain tops of Italy.⁵⁴

Of course, not all Pioneer companies were given such exciting assignments. For the most part, Pioneer work in areas already under Allied control was less risky and more boring. A BaTswana company serving in Italy composed a song to ease the long hours of monotonous labor moving boxes of rations, loading ammunition to trucks, and heaving gasoline cans.⁵⁵ As Leroy Vail and Landeg White explain in their research of colonial Mozambique, songs often make symbolic statements about common experiences and concerns. "Whole groups of people are able to identify with such cultural expressions; hence, these narratives and songs reflect popular consciousness".⁵⁶ Although it would be wrong to

⁵³This story of 1991 Coy was described by CSM Mafunda Sakati in The Swazi Pioneers. Bechuana, Basuto and Swazi Pioneers all performed portage duties in Italy under similar conditions as described in this account.

⁵⁴B. Gray, Basuto Soldiers in Hitler's War (Maseru, 1953), Chapter XI.

⁵⁵BNA S 133/2/1, Newsletters from AAPC: "Song of Bechuana of the Eighth" by military observer Capt. Gray. nd. Translation of song within the news clip.

⁵⁶Leroy Vail and Landeg White, "Forms of resistance: songs and perceptions of power in colonial Mozambique," in American Historical Review, vol. 88, no. 4 (1983), 334-70; also Banditry, Rebellion and Social Protest in Africa, ed. Donald Crummey (London: James Currey, 1986)193-224. According to these authors, songs often show an awareness of a bigger world outside the immediate relations of power.

assume that every song performed by soldiers automatically sprang from the whole military community, BaTswana soldiers were perhaps identifying with the larger war effort. The Pioneers dedicated their song to General Montgomery, the leader who caught their imagination just as he had that of their U.K. comrades.⁵⁷

"Tsholetsang Montgomery"

- Verse I: Tsholetsang Montgomery (Praise to Montgomery)
Moeteledi wa rona (Our Leader)
- Verse II: Enta modimo o ka thusa (May God be his guide)
Moeteledi wa rona (Our Leader)
- Verse III: Phenyio ya nna ya gagwe (Victory is always his)
Moeteledi wa rona (Our Leader)
- Verse IV: Huri Huri Montgomery (Hurrah! Hurrah! Montgomery)
Moeteledi wa rona (Our Leader)⁵⁸

Although further research needs to be done on military songs and their importance to African soldiers, communal songs and dances must have been part of everyday routines at many pioneer labor camps. Today, soldiers sing while they train, march and work. Military "ditties" or songs often draw meanings and values from immediate military social relationships, popular perceptions of the defeats and triumphs of war, and conventions of heroism and cowardice. Patrick Harries explains in his study of migrant laborers in Mozambique and South Africa that "work songs learned on the mines were an expression of the expanded space within which people lived".⁵⁹ African soldiers sung their songs not only to alleviate the monotony of pioneer labor, but as members of a much wider military community, their songs were thus an expression of

⁵⁷General Montgomery was said to have almost a messianic concern for the welfare of his men which turned soldierly respect into loyalty of a new kind. His phrases and sayings swept through the Eighth Army. "It was a great achievement," Sir Oliver Leese recorded in his unpublished memoirs, "as day by day his own personality was spreading through the Army, and in the end the battle plan became the personal affair and interest of each man." Nigel Hamilton, Monty, 108.

⁵⁸Bent's official history lists 16 casualties in the Italian campaign. Ten Thousand Men, 107.

⁵⁹Patrick Harries, Work, Culture, and Identity: Migrant Laborers in Mozambique and South Africa, c. 1860-1910 (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1994), 124.

solidarity with other British soldiers. African cultural expressions such as singing were changing due to new social situations, military life, and war.

In addition to the gruelling work pace in Italy, there were other tough conditions to endure. The weather turned rainy and icy cold as the fall season overtook southern Europe. Army supply officers attached to Pioneer Coys during the first winter were caught somewhat unprepared. Everything was in short supply because shipping had been dedicated to the movement of troops and essential war equipment. However, consignments of woollen comforts knitted by wives in Bechuanaland were slowing arriving in Italy, and helped ward off the cold. Extra blankets were also issued when they became available. When the snows and winds attacked full force, servicemen huddled in tents for the night, woke to find the snow-weighted canvas wrapped around their ears. For those who had endured the winters of Syria, it was just another winter. Unseasoned troops had to learn how to stay warm and protect themselves from the dangers of living in a cold climate. This was not always an easy task. Their boots clogged with mud, their uniforms became worn and thin, and many wished for the warmth of the Middle East:

We had sou'westers, we had gas capes, we had gumboots the first winter, but it was no proposition at all. On aerodrome duty, perspiration used to freeze up between your toes and it was like daggers going in and you could do nothing about it because you couldn't get your boot off in time. The next season we wore leather boots.⁶⁰

For several months, the BaTswana Pioneers withstood the unfamiliar pain of frozen fingers and toes. The weather did not improve until April 1944 when the final preparations for the defeat of the German armies in Italy commenced. APC quarters and rations were also different in Italy than in the Middle East.⁶¹ Living accommodations were rarely permanent

⁶⁰J. Kroos, War in Italy, 30.

⁶¹In the Middle East the men slept in large, heavy tents usually in camps away from the local population. PRO DO35 1183/Y1069/1/1 F122-135, Report on African and Colonial Troops Employed With British Forces, 9 January 1944.

as the men were on the move constantly. If there were such accommodations, they went to the Allied fighting troops.⁶² Generally, this meant that Bechuana soldiers slept in small bivouac tents surrounded by a sea of mud, or in whatever abandoned structure that was as yet unoccupied. "Smoke personnel were often housed in the most undesirable quarters in towns and harbors," wrote LtCol Charnock on one of his initial inspection tours in Italy.⁶³ He went on to explain further: "The quarters are usually very damp and unhealthy buildings surrounded by slums of the worst type swarming with the poor and demoralized people who are ready to sell anything for money or food."⁶⁴ Bent wrote in Ten Thousand Men:

Once 1966 company occupied a derelict building in the forward area at night without lights; the floor was broken and the men kept falling through into the cellar, emerging bruised and dusty and clambering up the ladders again.⁶⁵

The conditions were obviously shocking; there had been nothing like this during the men's tours in the Middle East. Not only were the living conditions bad, but so was the food.

Several veterans I interviewed remember that the mealie meal was bad, and the meat was often spoiled and full of worms. Official reports substantiate this claim, "As mentioned in previous reports the Bechuana are very dissatisfied with mealie meal, and it is strongly recommended that the ration scale be amended to read 10 ounces additional bread to replace this commodity."⁶⁶ If their normal rations were not available,

⁶²R.A.R. Bent, Ten Thousand Men, 50.

⁶³A-7 (Colonial Troops) of the British Forces administration section of Allied Forces H.Q. took over the duty of inspecting the Pioneers and Gunners in Italy. This sub-section was in charge of Colonel Charnock, who had previously been A.G. 10 in the Middle East. He and Major Germond had worked with HCT troops for several years. R.A.R. Bent, Ten Thousand Men, 64-65.

⁶⁴PRO DO35 1183/Y1069/1/1 F122-135, Report on African and Colonial Troops Employed with British Forces, 9 January 1944.

⁶⁵R.A.R. Bent, Ten Thousand Men, 58.

⁶⁶Ibid. The mealie meal was reported to be of a very inferior quality and apparently not supplied from the Union of South Africa.

the men received whatever the British were getting.⁶⁷ Surprisingly, the health of the men remained remarkably good: one company had an average of two men reporting sick per day out of 350.⁶⁸ It was reported that "Europeans were suffering more from the effects of the weather than the Africans".⁶⁹ Lt Col W. Morrison wrote specifically of 1976 Bechuana Dilution Coy:

The Bechuana, since their arrival in Italy, have taken a new lease of life and although working under extreme difficulties owing to wet and muddy ground, are always ready for action against either Germans on the ground or in the air.⁷⁰

Whatever the expectations might have been of their commanders, the Pioneers and Gunners from Bechuanaland in their initial months in Europe held up under enemy fire, and performed the duties they had been trained for. However, reports also show that Italy quickly lost its initial allure in the eyes of the men. Their experiences throughout 1944-1945 turned them into real pessimists.

II. Cassino, Combat, and Change

As the Italian campaign developed after the battles for Salerno and Naples, more and more Bechuana troops were transferred from the Middle East.⁷¹ Their numbers, the variety of their employment, and their dispersion all over the forward and rear areas of both Eighth and Fifth Armies, make it impracticable to discuss all their deeds and adventures.

⁶⁷The British Army rations were not envied. According to one report, "British rations, were half of what South Africans were getting and about an eighth of what the Americans were eating. The British diet consisted of bully beef, spam and biscuits." Jack Kros, War in Italy (South Africa: Ashanti Publishing (Pty) Ltd., 1992), 29.

⁶⁸Ibid., 47. Col S.H. Walker estimated that the daily sick parade averaged not more than 2%. PRO DO35 1183/Y1069/1/1 F88-90, Report on visit to CMF by A Branch, A-7, 21 March 1944.

⁶⁹PRO DO35 1183/Y1069/1/1 F113-121, Report by Lt Col Charnock after his first visit to HCT troops in Italy, 2 January 1944, "The sickness rate tends to be slightly less than the rate among British personnel of the Regiment in which they are diluted". Remember that this was a major concern in WWI. Military commanders were initially skeptical about Africans performing well in the colder climates of Europe.

⁷⁰Ibid.

⁷¹British Pioneers were monthly being sent home to prepare for their part in the "Second Front" and few were left in Italy as the spring of 1944 ended. Indian and Colonial Pioneers took over much of the work. Rhodes-Wood, History of the Pioneers, 223.

It will be better to focus briefly on two important events, the battle for Cassino and the move to Rome.

Volumes have been written about the monastery on the crest of Monte Cassino and the four battles it took to take this important German stronghold which blocked the Allied advance to Rome, but few focus directly on the experiences of the Pioneers and Gunners from Bechuanaland. For Botswana veterans, the battles for Cassino stand out vividly in their memories for they named Cassino "Marumong", the place of bullets.⁷² Whenever asked about their experiences in Italy, the men instantly recalled the fierce fighting, the incredible noise from the artillery duels, and the horrific results. The Bechuana Pioneers played only a small part in the total Allied effort to take Cassino, but their efforts are noteworthy.

Throughout the early months of 1944, British, New Zealand, South African, Indian, Polish and Free French troops threw their weight against impenetrable defenses held by fanatical German troops with little success. Accompanying these forces, were engineers and pioneers of several nationalities whose jobs were made extremely difficult by severe weather and perilous terrain surrounding Cassino. Among the first Bechuana to arrive at Cassino, were 1977 (BaNgwato) Smoke Company, who were tasked to provide a smoke screen to cover New Zealand infantry attacks across the three bridges over the Rapido river near Cassino. Conditions here were worse than any experienced throughout the war. Enemy fire continued night and day; the men were forced to stay in their foxholes. If a man stood up, he invited a sniper's bullet, machine-gun fire or mortar bombs.⁷³ Food, toilet breaks and any other activity requiring movement could only be accomplished at night. After two days, enemy fire eventually forced 1977 Bechuana Coy to abandon all efforts to provide smoke cover for the New Zealand infantry. The more experienced,

⁷² Bent, Ten Thousand Men, 53.

⁷³Ibid., 53.

and well-armed, New Zealand infantry took over the operation of lighting the smoke canisters which provided ground cover for infantry along the infamous Highway 6 just west of Cassino.⁷⁴ The first Battle of Cassino had been a victory for the enemy and two more confrontations left both sides depleted and weak as winter forced offensive operations to cease once again. Despite terrible losses, not a yard of ground had been gained. "Unfortunately," wrote General Alexander, "we are fighting the best soldiers in the world--what men!" They were the German 1st Parachute Division.⁷⁵

Throughout the spring of 1944, Bechuana work crews could be seen along the Gustav Line with numerous other pioneer units near Cassino. Preparations were being made for the fourth and last Battle of Cassino. An assault on the monastery from Castle Hill, Hangman's Hill and Snake's Head Ridge was organized. In the forward areas, Pioneers of every nationality were increasingly used in portage.⁷⁶ All supplies had to be carried up from the Rapido river by 800 mules and companies of porters, under observation and fire every yard of the way.⁷⁷ The Gari river was also reconnoitred, bridged and marked. There were dumps to be made and camouflaged for bridging material, engineer stores, boats, duckboards, ammunition; hard roads had to be built across the soggy fields to the crossing places. Even during the lulls, casualties continued to flow down the mountain. Modise Thebe (1980 Bechuana Coy) recalls that the worst fighting in all of Italy occurred at Cassino.⁷⁸

⁷⁴Bent suggests that the Bechuana were not in good morale, nor were they properly trained to perform in a combat situation of this magnitude. Understandably, the men of 1977 Coy refused (for the most part) to come out of their foxholes and light the smoke canisters when the order was given. That is why the New Zealand infantry took over their duties. Ten Thousand Men, 53-54.

⁷⁵C. Trench, The Indian Army and the King's Enemies, 245; Jennifer Crwys-Williams, A Country at War 1939-1945 (Rivonia: Ashanti Publishing, 1992), 365.

⁷⁶Rhodes-Wood, History of the Pioneers, 221.

⁷⁷Ibid.

⁷⁸Modise Thebe, E.C. 1492, interview by author, Kumankwane, 15 July 1994.

"The Germans were very strong there," he said. Oualenna Lekalake echoed this view: "We collected too many corpses along the front-lines at Cassino; we had to mass bury the casualties."⁷⁹ The Poles finally took Cassino on the morning of 17 May. After four months of fierce fighting, the destruction at Cassino was nearly total.⁸⁰

The victory at Cassino tore a great gap in the Gustav Line through which the Allies poured troops and armor. The way was now open to Rome. On 4 June the Americans marched down the streets of the famous holy city. The Eighth Army was not far behind. Within only a few days of its capture, soldiers were on leave seeing the Vatican, including many Bechuana Pioneers.⁸¹ On 6 June the Anglo-American armies landed in Normandy, and the Italian campaign became a sideshow.

In retrospect, the battles for Cassino were, without a doubt, important to the successful Allied advance through Italy. The Bechuana Pioneers and Gunners had contributed to one of the greatest coordinated military accomplishments in history in a variety of ways unforeseen to policy makers or strategists in 1941. If it had not been for the critical shortage of British manpower and the insatiable demand for labor, the African pioneers would probably never have left North Africa and the Middle East. The impact of Cassino and the other Italian campaigns on the men is somewhat difficult to assess due to a lack of written reports by Africans. However, several impressions can be gleaned from historical accounts, official documents and interviews.

First, if one reads the documentary evidence on Cassino, no one

⁷⁹Oualenna Lekalake, E.C. 11319, interview by author, Kumankwane, 14 July 1994. The Germans lost 10,000 dead and wounded and 10,000 POW's; the British 5,500 casualties, the Americans 21,500, the French 10,500 and the Poles 4,000. Figures in J. Kros, War in Italy, 59.

⁸⁰Veteran Podithomo Kolobe, Gunner 1975 Coy, interview by author, 19 July 1994.

⁸¹As the battles continued in Italy, the Bechuana passed through Rome and some were temporarily stationed in the vicinity of the capital. They toured the Cathedral of St. Peters, Vatican City, and some were fortunate enough to see the Pope. BNA S 133/2/1, C.M.F. News Letter, June 1944

who was there could have been unaffected. African soldiers from Bechuanaland for the first time since World War One directly experienced the power and destruction of modern warfare on a large scale. According to General Montgomery, "no troops could stand up to sustained heavy and accurate artillery and mortar fire without suffering a certain loss of morale."⁸² The Bechuana soldiers survived their ordeal because of their training and fitness. The men had proved to themselves that they could perform as well as any other soldiers within the Eighth Army, and the result was a growth in confidence and self-assurance.

For some, the war was beginning to raise questions about British superiority. From the very start of the Italian campaign, the Allies had suffered from poor planning, inter-service rivalry, shortages of resources, and overwhelming enemy forces.⁸³ General Montgomery had confided to "Simpo" Simpson, director of Military Operations:

I have been thinking a great deal about the whole Italian campaign. I consider that we [the Allies] made a great many mistakes and have made a sad mess of it; if our strategy, and the conduct of the campaign, had been kept on a good wicket we would have had Rome by now easily...If you make mistakes in war it is not easy to recover.⁸⁴

Ordinary soldiers rarely vocalized their worries to superiors, and Botswana veterans seemed reluctant to say anything negative about the British now. However, official documents reflect a growing awareness of a change in African attitudes towards the war and their leaders after 1943.

Second, being at the sight of so much death changed some men's attitudes about the value of life, at least temporarily. According to veteran Motlotlegi Galetlobogwe Mabi, "If someone died, I did not care--too bad."⁸⁵ This callous attitude about death was probably due to heavy

⁸²Nigel Hamilton, Monty, 92.

⁸³Ibid., 185-187.

⁸⁴Ibid., 194.

⁸⁵Motlotlegi Galetlobogwe Mabi, interview with Barry Morton, note 120, 3 April 1994.

Allied casualties during the Italian campaigns.⁸⁶ It may not have been something entirely new though. Soldiers who had worked on the Rand mines prior to their military careers had witnessed brutal faction fights. Participants in mine conflicts were described as having "a ferocious and blood-curdling attitude."⁸⁷ According to Patrick Harries, attitudes such as these were an expression "of courage and bearing perceived to be signs and markers of masculinity."⁸⁸ African soldiers insulated themselves from the harshness of their situation by erecting emotional boundaries in a turbulent and unpredictable world.

Third, the Bechuana men came in contact with many unfamiliar peoples, especially whites, in a myriad of unfamiliar social situations. Some of these new experiences were nothing short of revolutionary. At home in the Protectorate, the men had come in contact with few whites except for British administrators, traders and missionaries who were always in dominant positions within colonial structures. BaTswana peasants had little opportunity to know them personally. Now they were meeting soldiers, support personnel, and civilians from various backgrounds, status, and educational levels, many of them from the working classes. In their everyday work, they came in contact with hundreds of Italian workers recruited for the Pioneers.⁸⁹ The exact degree and intensity of solidarity with these workers is difficult to determine, but it seems likely that to some extent a common consciousness of their position as workers, as opposed to members of an ethnic group from Bechuanaland, began to develop.

⁸⁶Ibid., 199. British casualties after the Sangro battle in November 1943 had been almost 5,000 men. The 8th Indian Division, in particular, had lost so many troops and had so few reinforcements that it would have to be taken right out of the line.

⁸⁷Patrick Harries, Work, Culture and Identity, 121-122. Although mine faction fights rarely resulted in high casualty rates, they were an expression violence and power.

⁸⁸Ibid.

⁸⁹An Italian Pioneer Civil Labor Unit was formed in October 1943 under the direction of British army personnel. Rhodes-Wood, History of the Royal Pioneer Corps, 208-209.

In a more general sense the war-time experiences of some members also meant an expansion of their world view. Pioneers slept in the vineyards and farmyards of the Italian countryside as the army moved from place to place, meeting many local farmers and their families. German prisoners-of-war were in particular a curiosity.⁹⁰ According to veteran Ramonaka Semele, some of the prisoners were female.⁹¹ Black Americans, who were frequently camped near the Bechuana in Italy, talked to them about racial discrimination in America and the differences in military opportunities afforded to them.⁹² According to veteran Abang Nkwe, "American black soldiers did many of the same duties as the APC, so they often talked about army life."⁹³ When the soldiers were on military passes or leave, Italian women willingly invited them into their beds in exchange for money or gifts.⁹⁴ Italy was indeed different than the Middle East where Islamic religious prohibitions and familial control over young unmarried women had largely prevented sexual contact

⁹⁰Many of the men talked of guarding German prisoners off and on throughout their tours. They did not like Germans much for it was well known that "if German soldiers caught black soldiers they executed them on the spot." Judge Batloboga, interview by Barry Morton, Maun, note 41, 23 March 1994.

⁹¹Ramonaka Semele, E.C. 2016, 1974 Coy, interview by author, Odi, 19 July 1994.

⁹²Tswapong historical texts, compiled and edited by D. Kiyaga-Mulindwa, 1980. University of Botswana Library. According to Kiyaga-Mulindwa's interviews, Black Americans were curious about African soldiers, their motivations for joining the British military and conditions under which they served. In general, Black American servicemen resented segregationist practices within the U.S. Armed Forces. See Neil A. Wynn, The Afro-American and the Second World War (Great Britain: The Camelot Press Limited, 1976), chapter two.

⁹³Abang Nkwe, E.C. 3167, 1987 Coy, interview by author, Tlokweng, 18 July 1994. Also Ruth Danenhower Wilson, Jim Crow Joins Up (New York: Press of William J. Clark, 1944), 97. American Negro soldiers were used heavily in labor units during the war. "One unit after another of Negro soldiers with special training in some skilled branch of the Army is being changed into a labor unit. Such a move confirms our Negro population in the bitter belief that their race will serve principally as work units," wrote Wilson.

⁹⁴Modise Thebe, interview by author, Kumankwane, 14 July 1994; PRO DO35 1183/Y1069/1/1 F122-135;

with foreign women.⁹⁵ In the Middle East, the soldiers were accommodated in tentage and as a rule were away from inhabited localities. In Italy, war and poverty made prostitution for white women an alternative economic strategy for survival. Clients were not chosen according to race or class, but on the ability to pay for services rendered. Soldiers of every nationality frequented Italian brothels for sexual comfort during the war. Although the very nature of these contacts were short and superficial, it was the first time BaTswana men had an opportunity to be intimate with white women. Soldiers were issued condoms, received free medical treatment for venereal diseases, and counseled on the evils of sex. It was not, however, considered illegal or against army regulations to visit brothels.

Indeed, there was much to learn in Italy through observation and through exchanging ideas with foreigners. This was facilitated by the fact that many of the BaTswana had learned rudimentary English in military classes.⁹⁶ For those who did not speak English, it was a little more difficult, but not impossible to learn what was going on. Comrades often shared the content of discussions with fellow servicemen over dinner or during the long boring stints of guard duty.⁹⁷

That Italy posed new opportunities for African soldiers was recognized by military authorities shortly after the invasion. Their

⁹⁵Defilement resulting from sexual intercourse is called *janaba*. People under the polluting effect of a *janaba* resulting from sexual intercourse are excluded from performing prayer, pilgrimage, and Qur'an recitation until they have gone through ritual purification called *tahara*. Women in Islamic societies are expected to be modest. The Qur'an specifies that men are in charge of women's lives. Richard C. Martin, Islamic Studies: A History of Religions Approach (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1966, 1982), 161-166; 222-228.

⁹⁶Trouble Gaborone, E.C. 2165, 1987 Coy, interview by author, 19 July 1994, "those who could speak English talked with Americans."

⁹⁷Conversations must have been very basic at first but many veterans still remember Arabic, Italian or English phrases they learned while in the military. After several years in one place, the desire to communicate is usually overcome. O.J.E. Shiroya noted this in his study of Kenyan soldiers in WWII II. East African soldiers also told stories of discussions and conversations with foreigners. Kenya and World War II, 57.

potential long term effects in terms of colonial relations in South Africa were referred to in a report by LtCol Charnock:

In Europe the conditions are totally different. The cold wet winter of Italy is something new to these troops who are used to dry winters and dislike damp cold. The temptations in the way of drink and women are far more numerous now than they have experienced in the M.E. and what is more serious they are now dealing, not with the despised Arab but with Europeans whom they have always looked upon as their masters and superiors. In Italy they have met with a very different European who is ready to treat them as equals and has little colour consciousness. Contact with the Italian and Sicilian owing to the density of population is forcibly very close and though the people which our troops meet are admittedly of the poorer working class, they are nevertheless white and the argument which one often hears that the African and Colonial does not look upon Italians as Europeans is false. Owing to the extreme poverty and want of the local population the soldier is necessarily in a far superior position than they are and is able to offer many things which they are in dire need of; in fact his position is almost the reverse to what it is in his own home. For a little money he can buy unlimited quantities of the wine which the African is forbidden in his own country; he can obtain a white woman which is a serious crime in Africa, and generally speaking he finds himself mixing with the white population on almost equal footings.⁹⁸

According to this report, the repercussions of military service in Europe posed a potential threat to colonial order. "Mixing with the white population on almost equal footings has made an impression on the mind of the African--and if care is not taken, might have unfortunate repercussions not so much in his own homeland, but in the neighboring European states (especially South Africa) where 70% of these men find employment," wrote Charnock.⁹⁹ In addition, from the officer's point of view, military discipline and morale were quickly eroding as the men were becoming more "arrogant and disobedient."¹⁰⁰

LtCol Charnock's opinion about the effects of African soldiers being stationed too close to Europeans mirrored the British High Command's position on the matter. Correspondence from the Dominions Office and from Lord Harlech at Cape Town reveal strong fears about the

⁹⁸PRO DO35 1183/Y1069/1/1 F122-135, Report on African and Colonial Troops Employed with British Forces, 3 January 1944.

⁹⁹Ibid. It was well known that there were not enough jobs in Bechuanaland to employ future veterans. Most of the men were expected to seek employment in the South African mines upon discharge from the APC.

¹⁰⁰Ibid.

future impact of such intimate contact with whites in Europe. Because of heightened misgivings expressed by military officials and political pressure from South Africa, a top secret letter reveals that the War Office had decided that the HCT Pioneers would be removed from Italy as soon as war conditions permitted.¹⁰¹ Smoke Coys and Fire Brigades were especially targeted for removal as it was deemed "unsuitable" for Africans in Europe. Both the work the men did and the localities they were forced to live in, were said to be having a bad effect on discipline. For example, certain Swazi "smoke" companies were getting drunk during the day and simply walking out of their barracks into the bustling city streets visiting bars and brothels.¹⁰² Because of manpower shortages, reassignment orders were not issued until the last few months of 1945.

In the interim, company commanders were instructed to provide the "proper leadership" to their men in regards to mixing with Europeans. This placed junior officers, especially in Dilution Coys, in a difficult position.¹⁰³ Most British officers did not have the time nor the energy to police their men constantly in their off-duty hours and on the job in a Dilution Coy, there was only one British officer and two or three N.C.O.'s to supervise a company of several hundred African troops. Furthermore, British officers straight from the U.K. were young and inexperienced. Colonel Collins wrote, "some young officers were in a state approaching bewilderment and unhappiness at being posted to African Coys in forward areas".¹⁰⁴ Many officers did not have any prior knowledge regarding Africans in the military. Sexual practices were

¹⁰¹PRO DO35 1184/Y1069/1/2 F274, War Office, Top Secret Letter Regarding Service in Europe, 8 April 1944.

¹⁰²PRO DO35 1183/Y1069/1/1 F122-135, Report on African and Colonial Troops Employed by the British Forces, 3 January 1944.

¹⁰³PRO DO35 1183/Y1069/1/1 F125. Col Charnock further stated, "the moral responsibility towards the Territories which have supplied these troops and towards the colonial administration rested almost entirely on these inexperienced unit commanders."

¹⁰⁴Ibid.

emotionally charged subjects which needed very tactful handling, especially as the example and behavior of European troops in these matters often left much to be desired.

Additionally, this was not World War One, when Africans were confined to compounds. The times had changed; Smoke Coys stationed in the towns and near harbors mixed freely with the local populations. In general, as long as the men did not get into trouble, there was little interest in enforcing dictates from higher-ups at the company level.¹⁰⁵ Direct intervention would have to come from the Pioneer Headquarters at Taranto or from higher up the chain of command. Military officials continued to stress the men's own tribal traditions which forbade drink and women during war, on pride of race and tribe, and on their obligations to their own families at home to curb social abuses.

The agency which supervised HCT troops at Headquarters, a military group simply named A.7, was responsible for with overseeing recreation and welfare in Italy, as A.G. 10 had been doing in the Middle East.¹⁰⁶ Alternative recreational activities were planned to channel the men's interests away from the brothels and "vino" so readily available in the small towns.¹⁰⁷ Two African and Colonial rest camps were built in Southern Italy so that the soldiers could take leave in an appropriate, supervised and segregated setting.¹⁰⁸ The APC earned 14 days leave a year and the rest camps were naturally popular with the men, especially

¹⁰⁵PRO DO35 1183/Y1069/1/1 F122-135.

¹⁰⁶A new base depot was established at Taranto to handle administrative and welfare matters for all HCT troops. Welfare officers supplied recreational facilities with games, gramophones, records, papers, wireless sets, dart boards, etc. R.A.R. Bent, Ten Thousand Men, 64.

¹⁰⁷PRO DO35 1184/Y1069/3/2 F19-56, Conference Report on Demobilization, 21 January 1943.

¹⁰⁸208 African and Colonial Rest Camp was located at Naples. PRO DO35 1183/Y1069/1/1 F65-72, Col S.H. Walker, Tour Report, August 1944. See also R.A.R. Bent, Ten Thousand Men, 64.

the one located near Rome.¹⁰⁹ As in the Middle East, the camps provided the only means of getting away. Cinemas, canteens, talent shows, sports competitions and marabaraba remained the popular recreational activities with the men on local leave.¹¹⁰ Educational classes and church services were also more readily available at the camps.¹¹¹ Chaplains had been organized into field units which were comprised of one European padre and a number of African priests and catechists. They were constantly on the move administering to the soldiers' religious needs. Newspapers and lectures on the war brought the men up to date on current events. The newspaper Tlou was very popular with the men and all home news was avidly read.¹¹² Restaurants, lounges and clubs¹¹³ for African soldiers were built at the Rome camp which were run very similar to American USO clubs.¹¹⁴ To provide live musical entertainment, a BaTswana Drum and Bugle band was also permanently posted to this rest camp. A few lucky soldiers were able to visit the Cathedral of St Peters and Vatican City. Sgt M. Motalaote visited Rome where he excitedly reported that, "he saw the Pope carried into the room on a chair by four men."¹¹⁵

However, the desired effect of segregating the races by providing separate recreational facilities was not always successful. The Allied Forces Commander wrote the War Office in January 1945 that, "We have now

¹⁰⁹Welfare lorries made daily sightseeing tours and transport to and from Rome. PRO DO35 1183/Y1069/1/1 F99-121, Report on Visit to CMF in Feb, Mar, Apr 1945. See also "A Rest Camp in Italy," in The Bantu World (23 September 1944), 5.

¹¹⁰Marabaraba is a game, played with stones as counters, on a diagonally patterned board. R.A.R. Bent, Ten Thousand Men, 64.

¹¹¹Education officers (EO's) were assigned to each Coy in Italy but due to the nature of the work and the constant movement of the soldiers, classes were almost impossible to organize. PRO DO35 1183/Y1069/1/1, Report on Education, 18 June 1945; R.A.R. Bent, Ten Thousand Men, 66.

¹¹²S 133/2/1, C.M.F. Newsletter, June 1944.

¹¹³The Union Defence Force Institute (UDFI) were involved in the scheme. Restaurants and clubs for all non-European personnel were opened under their direction. The "Protea Club" and the "Drop in Cape Club" were in Florence and another called the "Mimosa" club was in Rome. I. Gleeson, The Unknown Force, 252.

¹¹⁴BNA S 133/2/1, Newsletter from APC on African Clubs dated 8 June 1945.

¹¹⁵S 133/2/2, Letters from the APC, number 22, dated 25 April 1945.

reached the stage where deterrents [in regards to sexual relations with Italian women] have worn off. After 12 months in Italy, HCT troops have come to realize that a certain type of European woman is only too ready to cohabit with them, and they have quickly lost their reserve."¹¹⁶ In order to combat the growing problem of interracial sex and the subsequent rise in venereal disease in Italy among African soldiers, several new strategies were employed.

In April 1945 the High Commissioner of South Africa agreed to a plan submitted by the War Office to penalize Africans for contracting venereal disease.¹¹⁷ HCT troops serving in Italy who were admitted to hospitals on contraction of VD had their proficiency pay stopped.¹¹⁸ This mostly affected HCT personnel below the rank of Sergeant (which were the majority) because they were the ones eligible to receive pay for obtaining proficiency in their jobs. Disciplinary measures against commanders who repeatedly neglected their supervisory duties were also authorized by the War Office.¹¹⁹ If these measures failed after a certain trial period, the War Office and the High Commissioner agreed that HCT troops would be removed from Italy, but this was to be a last resort.¹²⁰ Politically, the removal of HCT troops from Europe for racial reasons would have caused an outcry in Britain and in the Protectorates. In Britain, it was recognized that the HCT soldiers had excellent work

¹¹⁶BNA S 136/8, Letter from Allied Force HQ to Under Secretary of State, War Office, dated 9 January 1945.

¹¹⁷There had been a rise in VD cases, especially among soldiers stationed near Rome and Naples. Investigations were conducted by A.7 of the brothels near the African leave camps. Reports were forwarded to the War Office, Dominions Office and High Commissioner at Cape Town. PRO DO35 1183/Y1069/1/1 F99-121, Report on Visit to CMF in Feb, Mar, Apr 1945.

¹¹⁸BNA S 136/8, Telegram from High Commissioner, Cape Town, to Secretary of State, London, dated 4 April 1945. The amount forfeited was small, approximately 2d per day, but it also symbolized a loss of status. African soldiers were proud of their proficiency pay.

¹¹⁹Ibid.

¹²⁰Ibid. Letter from War Office to Supreme Allied Commander Med Theater, dated 7 July 1945 regarding Pay and VD.

records and manpower shortages were still critical.¹²¹ Although the dikgosi were not in favor of allowing the consumption of wine and unlimited access to brothels, they would have resented any policy which was so blatantly discriminatory when their men were risking their lives for the Allied cause.¹²² Tshekedi wrote in December 1944, "I write in this strain [on liquor] fully conscious of the fact that any soldier whilst on duty has to have the liberty accorded to every other soldier irrespective of race, colour or creed."¹²³ The BaTswana soldiers had been away from their wives for over four years; celibacy was difficult when white women were available and willing. The dikgosi were faced with the same problem at home with the wives of African troops. As the war continued, wives increasingly ran away, had extramarital affairs and children by other men.¹²⁴ One action instituted by policy makers to combat the problem of sexual misconduct was to institute a policy of home leave.

III. Military Home Leave

To combat growing dissension within the companies over discriminatory policies regarding army life in Italy, a home leave scheme was considered paramount by certain members of the Pioneer Headquarters Staff, particularly those who worked within the A. 7

¹²¹Bent sums it up, "the repatriation of the Bechuana and Basuto would have had a serious effect on the Italian campaign labor situation and on the Middle East base, and the armies could not consider releasing them permanently." Ten Thousand Men, 67; W.O. top secret telegram to A.F.H.Q. Algiers on 23 Mar 1944 stated, "manpower situation may make it essential continue use of HCT Coys in Italy." PRO DO 35 1183/Y1069/1/1 F105.

¹²²BNA S 137/1/6, Letter from Tshekedi Khama to DC at Serowe, dated 11 December 1944.

¹²³Ibid. Tshekedi thought no punishment should be afforded to the men who sought wine and women away from camp, but that deterrents should be placed in their way.

¹²⁴DCS 30/1, Confidential letter from Tshekedi Khama to the District Commissioner's Office, Serowe, dated 11 November 1944. Tshekedi refused to get involved with court cases involving adultery or divorce despite many letters written to him about the immorality of soldier's wives in the Protectorate. He wrote, "nothing can be done about these matters until after the return of the soldiers."

branch.¹²⁵ However, there was some dissension within the War Office and other G.H.Q./M.E.F. agencies over the granting of leave to HCT troops. Several arguments were made against the plan including lack of precedent. African soldiers in World War One had not been granted leave, for example.¹²⁶ The policy for British troops in the Middle East was that individuals must serve for six years outside the United Kingdom before they could be eligible for home posting. To many officers, it seemed unfair to grant leave to HCT soldiers when British troops were not eligible. Other colonial troops from Africa were not getting leave, although most of them had not been serving as long as HCT troops.¹²⁷ Also, military authorities had deemed it impractical to grant leave for East and West African soldiers because of the irregular flow of shipping. Instead of leave, G.H.Q./M.E.F. preferred to have fixed terms of service for Africans, such as 2 years, and then replace them with new recruits on expiration of time in service.¹²⁸ Another problem was finding replacements, especially for NCOs and those who held key positions. Combined with other military factors such as the invasion of Europe, the uncertainty of future developments, the shortage of manpower and above all the difficulties about shipping, a practical home leave scheme was considered unlikely.

Nevertheless, the possibility of devising such a scheme was

¹²⁵According to Bent, Sir Charles Arden Clarke, Resident Commissioner of Basutoland, was also influential in promoting a leave scheme. R.A.R. Bent, Ten Thousand Men, 67.

¹²⁶A note from GHQ West Africa to M.E.F. Command reads, "experience with African troops before and during Great War 1914-1918 proved that they will and do cheerfully serve even though separated from their families for periods up to three years." BNA S 136/6, Note in file on leave policy, dated July 1942.

¹²⁷Ibid.

¹²⁸Ibid. It was a little late for suggestions such as this. Most HCT troops had signed indefinite service contracts for anywhere in the world. However, in November 1943, agreements were reached on East Africa and West Africa leave schemes. Replacement personnel were to be despatched to G.H.Q./M.E.F. before they could take leave. See also PRO D035 1183/Y1069/1/2 F157-182.

carefully examined by G.H.Q./M.E.F. and the War Office.¹²⁹ Although official records are somewhat vague as to the reasons, it appears to have been related to alarming inspection reports on the deterioration of morale and the dire consequences associated with service in Europe. These reached the High Commissioner's Office in South Africa, and subsequently came to the attention of the War Office.¹³⁰ LtCol Charnock's report of January 1944, which caused a flurry of correspondence from the High Commissioner in South Africa, had prompted the War Office to consider two courses of action: either to restrict HCT troops in Europe to Sicily and Italy south of Rome or to ban use of HCT troops in static and base roles in Europe altogether, but allow them in forward combat areas.¹³¹ Neither, was militarily feasible in 1944. In fact, there was heavy resistance to limiting African roles in military sectors as this secret telegram from A.F.H.Q. Algiers indicates:

African soldiers have consistently done magnificent work in Italy and Sicily. Their morale and discipline is beyond reproach and sick rate lower than that of British troops.

Strongly urge that no steps be taken which would in any way restrict use of African troops anywhere in South Europe in any capacity or of selected African troops in North Europe if required. African troops like any others may deteriorate under certain conditions but it should always be in the power of the responsible commander to rectify matters as has been done in cases referred to by you.¹³²

The problem was made more difficult for the War Office because LtCol Charnock's report had drawn quite a bit of attention to the "moral

¹²⁹PRO DO35 1183/Y1069/1/1 F258, Note on leave scheme by Col. Collins, July 1943.

¹³⁰Although morale was also declining in the Middle East, the focus was on Europe because of the racial component of the problem.

¹³¹"Morale" was reported to be much better near the fighting. In combat areas, wine and women were not much of a threat to discipline. There was no time for such activities. PRO DO35 1183/Y1069/1/1, Report by S.H. Walker, 4 January 1944.

¹³²PRO DO35 1183/Y1069/1/1 F103 and F274, Secret Telegram from A.F.H.Q. Algiers to the War Office dated 31 Mar 1944. The War Office secretly agreed with the comments in this telegram and notified the Dominions Office on their position on 8 April 1944. It became the Dominions Office's job (Mr Tait) to allay the fears of the Secretary of State and Lord Harlech.

responsibilities" towards the Territories which supplied the troops and the colonial administrations which had for years fostered their development.¹³³ If the soldiers returned to their homes after the war radicalized with new ideas, future British colonial relationships might be damaged. Lord Harlech argued further that the War Office had a moral obligation to provide relief for the soldiers who had been in theater for over two years. Secretly he also hoped that a leave scheme might help with recruiting additional APC manpower in the HCT by "inculcating the idea that new recruits would help towards securing leave for long service men."¹³⁴ If replacements could be found, it followed that others might be discharged permanently, as was the case in East Africa. The battle lines were thus drawn between the politicians and the military tacticians over the employment of Africans in Europe. Taken together, there was a fair amount of pressure to do something positive to reward the APC's excellent war record, to raise morale, to spur recruiting, and diffuse the tense political situation. Because of military exigencies, the War Office was understandably reluctant to take a position which would undermine a military victory. Better to offer a peace offering--a home leave scheme. African soldiers would get a chance to go home which would make the colonial administrators less worried, and if implemented correctly, military officials would only lose a small percentage of their valuable labor resources at any given time.

In April 1944, the War Office authorized home leave for HCT personnel. Despite continuing manpower shortages in the Middle East and

¹³³PRO DO 1183/Y1069/1/1 F122-135 also F99-105, Report on African and Colonial Troops Employed with British Forces, 9 January 1944. In this regard, the Dominions Office was somewhat influential. They had written the War Office requesting an explanation of LtCol Charnock's report on conditions in Italy. Less than three weeks later, leave had been approved by the W.O.

¹³⁴PRO DO35 1184/Y1069/1/2 F 157-182, Secret letter from Lord Harlech to Machtig, 30 November 1943. This was somewhat important because recruiting had just been banned in Basutoland due to pressure from South Africa over labor shortages in the Coal Mines. The granting of leave was used as another justification to reopen recruiting for the APC.

Europe, there was no official requirement for direct replacements.¹³⁵ It was decided to hold off on a quota of reinforcements until the leave plan could be evaluated after the first batch was due to return. According to the plan, the longest serving men were to be selected for leave first. The number which could be released was based on a rate of five percent of every unit which had seen active duty since 31 December 1941. It was estimated at that time, that approximately 500 HCT personnel would be released every two months.¹³⁶ Because soldiers in Europe needed leave most urgently, a judgement affected more by political considerations than the actual situation, two drafts from CMF were to be selected to every one from MEF. The names of the fortunate were drawn by lot and they subsequently reported to the Pioneer Corps Depot in the Middle East to await shipping to South Africa. Home leave was for a period of 30 days. With travel, the soldiers were to be gone about three or four months. Unfortunately, the plan did not get off to a good start. The first African Pioneers did not reach South Africa until 3 September 1944.¹³⁷ They returned to the Middle East early in November. The second draft arrived in South Africa on 31 October and it returned in December. When Germany surrendered in May 1945, only three leave drafts had made it home. The plan had proved unworkable after all because of shipping shortages. Resident Commissioner Arden-Clarke, one of the original agitators for the leave scheme, thought the whole thing a scam which eventually hurt morale rather than improving it.¹³⁸ Only a few units had made it home, and those who had returned from leave were

¹³⁵Mainly because Lord Harlech was considering conscription as a method of replacing HCT soldiers which was politically unpopular in London. "Attlee was very strongly opposed to it." PRO DO35 1184/Y1069/1/2 F157-182.

¹³⁶PRO DO35 1183/Y1069/1/1 F73-85, General Order, C-in-C, Middle East Forces, 20 April 1944.

¹³⁷PRO DO35 1184/Y1069/1/2 F264-283 and F250-262. Leave and Removal of Troops.

¹³⁸PRO DO35 1184/Y1069/1/2, Telegram from South Africa (B.B.S.) to Dominions Office dated 15 August 1944. Arden-Clarke pushed heavily for a better leave scheme after his visit to CMF in July 1944.

informed that because they had been home they would be required to remain in theater until they were no longer needed. By mid-1945, home leave had come to symbolize to soldiers a commitment to return to the war for an indefinite period of time instead of immediate demobilization at the end of hostilities.¹³⁹

IV. The End of Hostilities and Demobilization

By mid-1944, the German commander of Army Group C, General F.M. Kesselring, had withdrawn his forces to the Gothic Line in the northern Italian Apennines. The combined Allied forces of 15th Army Group led by General Alexander (after 24 Nov, by General Clark) pursued him relentlessly throughout the fall. The British Eighth Army veered east, driving up the Adriatic coast. The going was rough. Rivers and swollen streams blocked the passage of machines and men. The APC were needed more than ever! The 5th US Army attacked to the west, towards Florence and Pisa. Once there, BaTswana Pioneers supported the British XIII Corps, as the Americans crossed the raging Arno. They could hardly keep up with the bridging and road work as they again moved into mountainous terrain near Giogo Pass.

The end of 1944 brought dramatic changes to many HCT Pioneer units. Because enemy air activity over Italy had decreased dramatically, many British Heavy Anti-Aircraft regiments were disbanded. BaTswana gunners were reassigned to other undiluted artillery units or placed in Pioneer Coys. This was a great disappointment for those who had become accustomed to operational duties. Men who only months before were shooting down German planes, were now employed in guarding, patching up roads, quarrying or moving ammunition. As mentioned

¹³⁹The fourth and fifth leave drafts of the APC were in South Africa on leave when peace was declared in Europe and were eventually demobilized amidst great controversy. Military officials wanted them to return to the Middle East to help with demobilization. Other HCT soldiers were not being released and most would not return to the Protectorate until late 1945 or 1946. Leaders in Botswana wanted their troops home. The Bantu World (29 June 1945), front.

earlier, morale often suffered when the APC were in static roles, because of the monotony.¹⁴⁰ Resident Commissioner Featherstone had visited with 1971 Coy (BaTswana) which had been taken off duties with Heavy Anti-Aircraft units and were to go to Garrison (guard) duties. He noted that their morale had deteriorated. The Company Sergeant Major stated, "their hearts were cast down because they were no longer on the front lines directly supporting combat operations."¹⁴¹

As some of the men were enduring assignment changes, the seasons changed. Winter stalked the soldiers in the Italian mountains and the fighting quieted as the armies prayed for a reprieve. There would be no winter offensive. General Clark had suffered tremendous casualties in the west, and had ordered his army to hold and consolidate the line.¹⁴² The Eighth Army also waited for reinforcements and supplies at Rimini. Hitler ordered Kesselring's army to stand and fight, but reinforcements were not getting through because of the Allied air offensive.¹⁴³ Operation "Olive" had ended. From January to April, the soldiers of the APC received a well-deserved rest, repaired their kits and uniforms, worked on assorted labor duties, and tried to survive the unpleasant weather. "There was no news of fresh advances and towns taken in Italy, no sense of being on the move forward; just the intense, intimate and almost malign company of great mountains and snow and driving rain," records Bent.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁰The O/C of 1944 Coy noted that his men were not always gainfully employed and that the search for work had had a "distinctly harmful effect on the morale of his company." PRO D035 1183/Y1069/1/1 F41, Extracts from letter by O/C 1944 Coy.

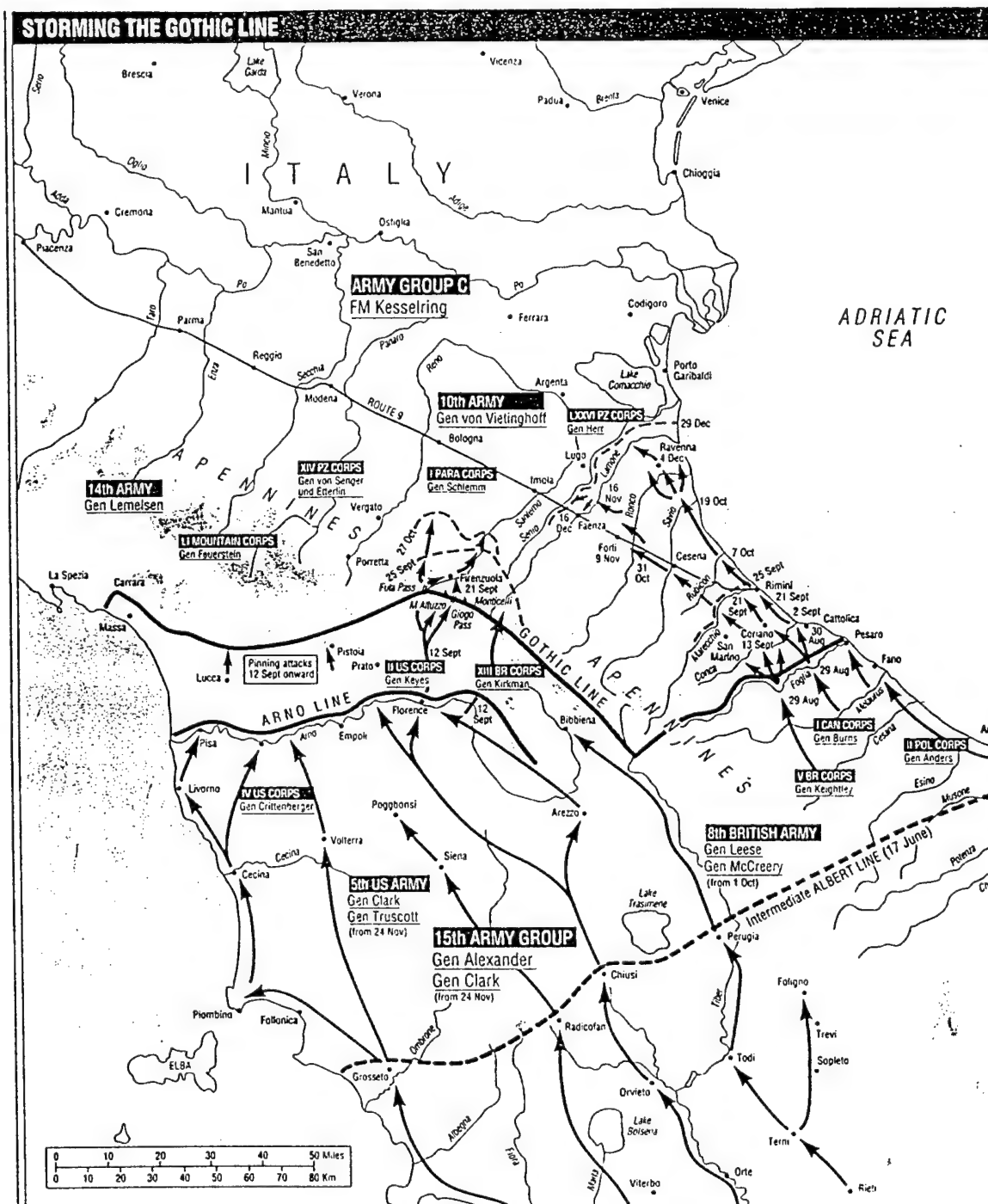
¹⁴¹PRO D035 1184/Y1069/1/2, Featherstone's Report on Visit to Middle East and Italy in May 1945. Lynne Iglitzin would argue that the men had lost their manhood and self-respect after being removed from front-line duty. "War, Sex, Sports, and Masculinity," 65.

¹⁴²From 20 September to 26 October the Fifth Army suffered 15,700 casualties. Charles Messenger, The Chronological Atlas of World War Two (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1989), 224.

¹⁴³Ibid.

¹⁴⁴Ten Thousand Men, 74.

MAP: STORMING THE GOTHIC LINE



Source: Charles Messenger, The Chronological Atlas of World War Two (N.Y.: Macmillan Publishing, 1989), 206.

The spring offensive of the British Eighth and the American Fifth Armies began on 9 April 1945. All along the front, the BaTswana were on the move again. With the British along the Senio river, were the 2302 Bechuana Dilution Coy which manned mobile H.A.A. guns. There are only a few surviving accounts which describe the final days of the war and the important role of anti-aircraft gunnery. The following description was written by one commanding officer who was very enthusiastic about the performance of his troops in combat:

At last D Day for what was to be the last battle in Italy found the Regiment deployed along the Senio front. While one battery provided lines of bursts to guide the heavy bombers, the other batteries advanced in close support of two famous British Infantry divisions, firing altogether 16,114 rounds and continuing until the PO [river] was crossed. This meant constant overnight moves, shifting the guns to new positions, plenty of firing and lots of hard work with very little sleep; but the enthusiastic Bechuana seemed to enjoy it all, and they never tired: in fact, some officers almost complained that the men were disobeying orders - that when there was any firing to be done these men detailed to rest could simply not be kept away from the guns!¹⁴⁵

The experienced BaTswana gunners had developed a keen sense of mission. Supporting the Americans, were men of 1972 Coy (BaNgwato and BaKwena) who fired 300 A.A. rounds an hour onto the enemy. During one battle, the BaTswana were ordered to turn out as infantry to give support at a point where the enemy were counter-attacking strongly.¹⁴⁶ Other HCT companies had also advanced well into the Po river valley. 1966, 1967, 1968, 1969, 1970 and 1977 companies were busy bridging, handling supplies and munitions for both the Fifth and Eighth Armies which eventually joined near Bologna on 21 April. As the Allied forces pushed northward, routing the Germans, 1966 Coy reached Trieste on the Yugo-Slav frontier. This was a vital port and headquarters for Tito's partisans. Another section working on clearing roads nearly made it to the Austrian border.¹⁴⁷ On 29 April, the Germans signed an unconditional

¹⁴⁵BNA S 133/2/2, CMF News Letter (HCT), May 1945.

¹⁴⁶"African Pioneer Corps," The Bantu World (15 June 1945), 4.

¹⁴⁷Ibid. It was noted that day leave parties were organized to take the men to see Venice, Padua and other famous towns once the German surrender was announced.

surrender at Caserta. The surrender took effect at 1300 hours GMT on 2 May.

The US Fifth Army reached Milan, already liberated by partisans, and the British Eighth Army Venice. Much to the relief of all the Allied forces, including the APC, the war in Italy was over. However, this did not mean that everyone went home immediately. The men were a long way from home and demobilization was not an automatic foregone conclusion, at least to military officials. Immediate demobilization posed a problem for military authorities and the HCT home governments. There were several factors which influenced the formulation of the final demobilization plan. These included the continuing hostilities in the Far East, labor shortages in all theaters of operation, the critical shortage of shipping, discipline problems among HCT soldiers and political repercussions.

Discussions on demobilization of Southern African troops were first held at a special conference in Pretoria in June 1944. Military representatives from the Middle East and the Resident Commissioners of each territory attended. Lord Harlech presided. At the conference it was decided that:

- a) in principle it was agreed that all men serving in Italy, North Africa and the Middle East command should be returned to the HCT as soon as they could be released at the end of the war in Europe, and as soon as shipping could be provided for them.
- b) it was felt that the men in North Africa and Italy should first be withdrawn to the Middle East Command and a phased scheme of release by units should be arranged there.
- c) it was declared that the rate of release would not be able to be set until a later date.
- d) the APC now in Europe and the Middle East would not be transferred to the Far East, a plan suggested by the W.O., but if labor was desperately needed there, a new recruiting campaign in the HCT would be considered.¹⁴⁸

The conference was followed by a flurry of correspondence between the Resident Commissioners and the High Commissioner's Office, regarding in particular, the last provision. Upon further consideration, the

¹⁴⁸PRO DO35 1184/Y1069/1/2 F218-238, War Office memo on conference held at High Commissioner's Office, Pretoria, 6 June 1944.

Resident Commissioners decided that voluntary recruiting from the HCT for service in the Far East would be unpopular and ultimately a failure.¹⁴⁹ The only way the War Office would get additional manpower would be through conscription, and as always, that was considered undesirable. According to the Resident Commissioners, it was doubtful whether the diKgosi would back a plan based on compulsion at this stage. In general, the feeling was that the territories had done their part in the war and new commitments should be avoided. However, G.E. Nettelton, the Government Secretary at Mafeking, was worried that if recruiting was not reopened in Bechuanaland, pressure might be applied overseas to gain volunteers for Far East service illegally. He wrote to the High Commissioner, "I am strongly opposed to calling for volunteers in the Middle East, since it is imperative that all the men should come back to their families and that they should not be placed in a position of having to volunteer owing to the moral influences which inevitably come into play in any military unit when volunteers are called for".¹⁵⁰ The comments and concerns of the Resident Commissioners were forwarded to the War Office, and in October the Secretary of State, wrote back that "it was of course not intended to use the companies now in the Mediterranean in the Japanese War, but the War Office suggests that on their release, it may be possible to recruit new companies for this purpose".¹⁵¹ At least for the time being, Far East service would not be a condition of demobilization for the BaTswana.

¹⁴⁹Ibid. Each of the Resident Commissioner's wrote a letter to the new High Commissioner, Walter Huggard, in the fall of 1944 outlining their position on military service in the Far East. Huggard supported the R.C.'s and went on record opposing further recruitment in the HCT because of manpower shortages in the Protectorate. See also BNA S136/7, Correspondence related to Far East service.

¹⁵⁰BNA S 136/7, Letter from Nettelton to High Commissioner, Pretoria dated 11 October 1944. Emphasis mine. This was an astute comment on how the military mind works. The military might have tried this tactic but I don't believe it would have been successful. The Bechuana had little knowledge of the Japanese War, and in their minds once Hitler was beaten, they had done their work.

¹⁵¹Ibid. Top Secret Letter from Secretary of State, London to High Commissioner, Pretoria dated 6 October 1944.

In November 1944 the War Office, in a spirit of cooperation, agreed to the general plan of demobilization as laid out at the High Commissioner's conference, but requested that the troops not be told the specifics due to the problems of shipping and the need to find replacements. The War Office, wishing to pay tribute to the excellent performance of HCT soldiers in the Italian campaign, informally agreed to give "top priority" to bringing the APC home first.¹⁵² Until such time, the W.O. argued, commitments needed to be maintained. Unfortunately, this arrangement had not been communicated to the Middle East command. The soldiers had already been read a promissory message in October regarding their futures:

1. You have probably heard that a scheme has been announced regarding the release of some British soldiers from the Army, when Germany has been defeated, and you may have wondered what will happen to you. It has been decided that the soldiers from the HCT must be told about the schemes that are being prepared for them.

2. When Germany is defeated, it will be possible to let you go back to your homes. But you must remember that you will not all be able to go back immediately, because it will be a big task to return you, and it will take many ships. So it is only fair that those of you who came overseas first, should be the first to go back home, and so far as possible, this will be arranged.¹⁵³

The message issued by G.H.Q./M.E.F. implied two things: that the men would go home after Germany was defeated, and that shipping space alone would restrict the rate at which they would be repatriated. The message was issued to boost declining morale during the winter of 1944.¹⁵⁴ The soldiers took the official statement as a promise.¹⁵⁵

One of the first indications that promise might not be kept

¹⁵²PRO DO35 1184/Y1069/1/2 F92, Note by H.B. Lawrence dated 8 August 1945; also F279-286.

¹⁵³PRO DO 35 1184/Y1069/1/2 F72, Announcement read out to all HCT troops serving in Italy in October 1944 at the request of G.H.Q./M.E.F. Emphasis not mine, but in original documentation.

¹⁵⁴Evelyn Baring had stressed the dangerous effect on morale of further service on cessation of hostilities in Europe in correspondence to G.H.Q./M.E.F. so often, that the generals must have been tired of the whining. PRO DO35 1184/Y1069/1/2 F279ff.

¹⁵⁵Ibid. F70. Major Gray, of A-7, A.F.H.Q./C.M.F. wrote A. Creech-Jones about the statement in August 1945 after several disciplinary incidents involving HCT over demobilization. He argued that it was urgent for London to repatriate HCT troops before they turned mutinous.

surfaced in the early months of 1945. Capt Germond of A-7 reported to Sir Evelyn Baring the contents of a special signal he had received on 29 March regarding all colonial troops. It read, "unless men with long service overseas could be repatriated before the end of the German war, it was most unlikely that opportunity would occur for more than six months afterwards."¹⁵⁶ Transportation had put a limit on movement of colonial troops from Italy to 3,000 per month until the end of hostilities.¹⁵⁷ There were approximately 15,798 HCT troops in Italy which meant at the rate of 3,000 per month, it would take almost six months to move everyone to the Middle East.¹⁵⁸ The Director of Labor, Brigadier Carter) stressed that he could not release African Pioneer Coys in Italy because there were no replacements.¹⁵⁹ Italian Pioneers (Civil Labor Units) were unsatisfactory and many were deserting. Until German Civil Labor Units could be found, there was nothing he could do.¹⁶⁰ Resident Commissioner Featherstone (Swaziland) stated bluntly in May 1945 that once these conditions became known to the troops there would be great dissatisfaction:

My impression is that morale is deteriorating to a greater extent than may be gathered from the reports we receive from A-7. The most disturbing aspect is the increasing resentment by Africans to any form of differentiation between black and white troops, or to restrictions which have been necessarily been imposed on "social" relations between them and the civilian population. Fracas between British Other Ranks and African Other Ranks are becoming more frequent, and there is an increasing tendency to refuse to obey orders given by British Warrant Officers and Non-Commissioned Officers.¹⁶¹

To officials at G.H.Q./M.E.F. it seemed everyone had become alarmist. There had been a few incidents of sit-down strikes, insubordination and

¹⁵⁶PRO DO35 1184/Y1069/1/2 F169-171, Report by Germond to Sir Evelyn Baring dated April 1945.

¹⁵⁷PRO DO35 1184/Y1069/1/2 F148-154, Featherstone's Report on Visit to Middle East and Italy in May 1945.

¹⁵⁸Ibid. Out of the 15,798, there were 4,559 dilutees.

¹⁵⁹Ibid.

¹⁶⁰There appeared to be some resentment over the urgency to release HCT troops to the Middle East. Featherstone noted, "There is obvious jealousy between Middle East HQ and A.F.H.Q. in Italy". PRO DO35 1184/Y1069/1/2 F148-154.

¹⁶¹Ibid.

even assaults but overall discipline had not deteriorated to such an extent that drastic measures were needed.¹⁶²

In April, G.H.Q./M.E.F. went on the defensive. General Reeve, obviously upset about rumors that the War Office had been cutting secret deals, issued an official notice to all user commands.¹⁶³ It read:

1) The impression appears to be current in some commands that it will be possible to release most of the colonial and locally enlisted troops from the MEF as soon as the war in Europe ends. This is not so and it may not even be possible for this GHQ to begin releasing them for many months after the defeat of Germany.

2) The rate of reduction of the colonial and locally enlisted troops in this theater must of course depend on military commitments and for this reason the War Office has laid down that the decision with regard to the rate of their release shall rest with the user command. It is further the policy of the War Office that the reduction of these troops shall not be effected at a rate which will prejudice the return of British personnel to the U.K.¹⁶⁴

3) The GHQ will try to meet the wishes of supplier commands as far as possible, but it must be made clear that the process of release is likely to be protracted; it is most undesirable in these circumstances that any impression to the contrary should become current amongst the personnel concerned.¹⁶⁵

Obviously, the War Office had been making different policy agreements with the High Commissioner in South Africa and with G.H.Q./M.E.F. Then in July, another very different statement was issued by the C-in-C Middle East Forces. The statement contained new conditions for

¹⁶²Most of the trouble had occurred among Basuto companies. See reports on growing resistance to British control in PRO DO35 1183/Y1069/1/1 F42-49.

¹⁶³Evelyn Baring admitted to Viscount Cranborne at the Dominions Office that a secret deal had indeed been agreed upon and that the War Office should be made to live up to their promises. Demobilization had become a hot political football before the war was over! PRO DO35 1184/Y1069/1/2 F279, Top Secret Letter from High Commissioner's Office to Viscount Cranborne, dated 30 April 1945.

¹⁶⁴The position seemed to be that upon the termination of hostilities certain categories of white troops were due to return to their homes on release at once, and more categories were due for release as time went on. The local commander had little or no say as to the availability of men for release, and the War Office was not going to agree to the retention of officers or men in release categories. PRO DO35 1184/Y1069/1/2 F148-158.

¹⁶⁵PRO DO35 1184/Y1069/1/2, F279-286 and F148-154, Reduction of Colonial and Locally Enlisted Troops, April 1945. The letter written by Gen Reeve was sent to HQ East Africa Command, GHQ West African Command, 203 Mil Mission in Pretoria and HQ Ceylon Army Command. Reeve had confided in Resident Commissioner Featherstone that it would probably be eighteen months to two years to get everyone home.

demobilization not specifically mentioned earlier. Paragraph four of that statement raised the specter of indefinite military service:

The Middle East is, and will continue to be, for a long time to come, an important military base for maintaining and supplying the armies in the Far East. It is necessary to keep here large numbers of British and African troops to operate and guard our installations, depots and lines of communication. It will be necessary for British troops to remain in the Middle East, away from their homes.¹⁶⁶

It seemed that once the Pioneers had been removed from Italy to the Middle East they were going to be considered available for further employment. Featherstone had picked up on this when he visited G.H.Q./M.E.F in May. According to him, the problem was compounded by the fact that many user commands in the Middle East were going to be losing white troops (especially technicians). As a result, HCT dilutees might be held longer, when they ought to be the first to go home on account of length of service.¹⁶⁷ Repatriation from the Middle East was now a matter of both labor requirements and shipping. Within these contradictory policy statements, lies the beginning of serious problems regarding demobilization, broken promises and discontent among HCT troops between 1945-1946. A soldier from 1974 Coy wrote, "the Makgoa will realize that we mean what we say when we say that we want the promise to send us home kept. Officers will know that as soon as a few of them are stoned or stabbed (as the Basuto have often done before and will do again) active steps will then be taken to begin to repatriate

¹⁶⁶Ibid. F73. There was already military and political concerns over the growing tensions in Palestine although this was not mentioned in this despatch to the troops. However, the HCT had been approached about recruiting new Coys for duties in the M.E., with a two year commitment.

¹⁶⁷PRO DO35 1184/Y1069/1/2 F148-158, Featherstone's Report on Visit to Middle East and Italy in May 1945. The greatest difficulty for obtaining timely releases was anticipated to occur among the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, Base Ordnance Depots and Transport Units. Men who worked in these units could only be replaced by white troops and the Director of Pioneer Labor did not know where he was going to find them. The work of such units, which included reconditioning all classes of vehicles, would go on for months after the end of the war in Europe.

these men."¹⁶⁸ To say the least, it also raised a furor among politicians and those military commanders employing HCT troops. The war in Germany had not even ended when high-ranking military officials began back-pedaling on their promises.

To further exacerbate the situation, some soldiers were taking matters into their own hands in South Africa. As mentioned earlier, a limited system of home leave had been in operation when Germany capitulated. At the time of the armistice, two leave drafts of 500 African Pioneer Corps (mainly Basuto but some Bechuana) were in South Africa, one still at home in the territories and the other at Durban awaiting shipment back to the Middle East. The latter refused to sail.¹⁶⁹ Personnel of this draft demanded to consult with their Paramount Chiefs on grounds that

(a) African Pioneer Corps had always been informed that they would be repatriated at end of European hostilities;

(b) Native Military Corps personnel similarly on leave were not returning North;

(c) The local press had reported imminent return of all Union troops for demobilization.¹⁷⁰

It immediately became clear that these soldiers could only be embarked with force, which would obviously have had disastrous results and caused far-reaching political repercussions.¹⁷¹ Authorities at G.H.Q./M.E.F. were very concerned about the APC violating demobilization orders which might give off the wrong impression of favoritism. They ordered that the HCT troops should be forced to comply with regulations and board the

¹⁶⁸S 133/2/2, Letters from the APC, 1974 Coy (signature unreadable), dated 1 August 1945.

¹⁶⁹Ibid., F203. There had been no improper conduct apart from their refusal to be medically examined before embarkation.

¹⁷⁰PRO DO35 1184/Y1069/1/2 F176-203, Top Secret Despatch from South Africa to Dominions Office, 14 May 1945.

¹⁷¹Ibid. Actually the commander at the Military Mission in Pretoria had ordered that the men be forced to board the ships with the help of the UDF. However, the High Commissioner rescinded the orders because he feared force might lead to race rioting, particularly because of Basuto sentiments against the UDF, and consequently there might be casualties.

ship.¹⁷² In the end there was little anyone could do. The ship had been ordered to leave and there had not been enough time to consult with local authorities or for the High Commissioner to get a reading from the War Office. Another vessel was not expected for another two months. After vigorous telegraphic correspondence between the Middle East Command and the War Office, it was agreed that both leave drafts would remain in South Africa pending demobilization, on condition that all further leave parties from C.M.F. or M.E.F. be cancelled. The War Office explained to the Middle East Command the political considerations involved, asked them to work out a phased scheme of release by units, and suggested the possibility of transferring Africans from A.F.H.Q. as replacements.¹⁷³ A serious political situation had been diffused and turning point reached with G.H.Q./M.E.F. commanders. However, word reached the BaTswana soldiers about the incident and some astutely recognized that the sit-down strike had been highly successful in forcing the hand of military officials. Soldiers discussed strategies of resistance as the repatriation scheme made little headway. In June 1945, the oldest serving companies began to leave Qasassin for home, and by August men who had come to the Middle East in the first five companies had been re-formed into their original companies from the Hvy A.A. Dilutions.¹⁷⁴ Some BaKgatlwa who had joined 1971 and 1972 Coys wished to remain behind so that they could go home with the main body of the first BaKgatlwa Coy, and they were unhappy about returning to their villages in small separate parties--some with 1971, some with 1972, and some with 1973. According to one soldier, "this showed an "esprit de

¹⁷²G.H.Q./M.E.F. wired the War Office on receiving word of the recalcitrant soldiers, protesting vigorously to the suggestion that they remain in the Union. Their position was that "worst repercussion would arise among all African troops as a result of the weak action proposed which strikes at the roots of release and leave plans". PRO DO35 1184/Y1069/1/2 F191, Telegram from C-in-C Middle East to 203 Mil Mission, Pretoria and Info War Office dated 16 May 1945.

¹⁷³PRO DO35 1184/Y1069/1/2 F92, Note in File on Leave Drafts, Signed by H.B. Lawrence, 8 August 1945.

¹⁷⁴R.A.R. Bent, Ten Thousand Men, 92.

corps", or a "team spirit" for their tribal companies. Soldiers wanted to return home victorious together."¹⁷⁵ Nearly all the men in these senior Coys had been gunners.

However, there were still many problems to overcome. The most persistent headache for G.H.Q./M.E.F. was lack of transport. With the victory over Japan in August, shipping had been diverted from Suez to the Far East to bring out Allied prisoners of war, a high proportion of whom were British and Dominion troops captured at the fall of Singapore; the condition of the men who had survived Japanese labor camps was abominable.¹⁷⁶ Their lives depended on speedy evacuation and medical care. This meant further delays in the repatriation of HCT troops. Despite promises that 28 companies would be repatriated by September (7 in July, 14 in August and 7 in Sept), only four HCT companies (1200 men) per month could be released because of shipping shortages.¹⁷⁷ It was predicted by the War Office that there would be a substantial increase during the first quarter of 1946, which would eventually start the companies moving faster.

Another embarrassing problem surfaced shortly after the first companies were demobilized in June. It had come to the attention of military commanders that a disproportionate number of those who had left, either on leave or as part of demobilization drafts, were Company Sergeant Majors and other Non-commissioned officers.¹⁷⁸ As a result, officers newly appointed in charge of re-formed Pioneer companies did not have any African expertise to guide them through this difficult period of waiting for shipping and repatriation. It was feared that morale would be seriously affected if these men were not returned. Subsequently, the C-in-C Middle East telegraphed the 203 Military

¹⁷⁵S 133/2/2, Letter from the APC to Mr Nettelton, 1974 COY (signature unreadable), dated 1 August 1945.

¹⁷⁶Ibid.

¹⁷⁷PRO DO35 1184/Y1069/1/2 F109, Telegram from C-in-C Middle East to War Office dated 19 July 1945.

¹⁷⁸BNA DCG 4/5, Demobilization of the APC by DC-Gaborone, 1944-1946.

Mission Office in Pretoria requesting that at least ten CSMS be returned for duty.¹⁷⁹ The High Commissioner was somewhat shocked by the request, but agreed to ask the Resident Commissioner's to approach the men. He knew the only way to honor the request was to ask for volunteers. This was arranged. The respective Deputy Resident Commissioners in Basutoland and the Bechuanaland Protectorate, with representative of the merafe, explained the position to the NCOs. The response was poor: only 12 out of 57 NCOs in Basutoland, two in Bechuanaland, and none in Swaziland volunteered to return.¹⁸⁰ Perhaps, this was just another factor which led to growing resistance to military control by HCT soldiers in the following months.

The dire predications regarding morale and indiscipline became a reality in several HCT companies near year's end. Military commanders knew from previous experience that demobilization could be fraught with danger.¹⁸¹ "For when peace breaks out, army discipline collapses," wrote American military writer, Willard Waller.¹⁸² "The soldier does not realize that it is necessary to keep an army in being in order to win the respect of one's allies, he does not understand by what a devious route diplomacy must travel from a state of war to a state of peace; he cannot comprehend why the routines of demobilization are so long-drawn out and tedious."¹⁸³ This was certainly holding true for the soldiers from Bechuanaland and the other High Commissioned Territories.

In August 1945, Major Germond of A. 7 branch wrote a personal letter to Mr Hall at the Dominions Office regarding BaTswana soldiers

¹⁷⁹PRO DO35 1184/Y1069/1/2 F155, Telegram from C-in-C Middle East to 203 MilMiss, Pretoria and Info War Office, 7 June 1945.

¹⁸⁰Ibid., F135-136, Top Secret Letter from High Commissioner to Dominions Office, 20 June 1945. See also BNA DCG 4/5, File on Demobilization. According to DC Gaborone, the two from Bechuanaland were a Sergeant from Serowe and a Corporal from Molepolole.

¹⁸¹In WWI, the shortage of ships, prevented the NMC from coming home for nearly a year after peace was declared. They, like many others, were used for internal security measures in Egypt, where strikes and internal disturbances occurred. I. Gleeson, The Unknown Force, 91.

¹⁸²The Veteran Comes Back, 77.

¹⁸³Ibid.

and demobilization. Germond had served with the BaTswana throughout the war both as a company officer and as a staff officer. Although he was aware of all the military exigencies regarding demobilization, he was very concerned that something might happen which would reflect negatively on their service record. Most of the APC under his supervision had now been moved to the Middle East and had been employed continuously for over four years.¹⁸⁴ He stressed to Hall that the soldiers were becoming extremely homesick and increasingly worried about their families back home.

The work performed by these troops in the campaigns in Middle East, Sicily and Italy have earned the praise of all the employing Services. The discipline of the Africans from the HCT left nothing to be desired. In 1944, however, it became evident that the men were becoming extremely homesick. This is not surprising when one considers that the average African does not absent himself from his home for long periods. The separation from their families has been and remains a great trial to them more especially as many wives, unused to being separated from their men for such a long time, have deserted their homes and children and attached themselves to other men in the territories.¹⁸⁵

Not only were the men homesick, but they had become disillusioned.¹⁸⁶

The first serious disruptions in the Middle East were not among BaTswana soldiers, but among the Basuto. Three companies (1943, 1949 and 1928 Basuto) had gone on strike and refused to perform guard duties as assigned by their commanders.¹⁸⁷ The strikers of 1943 Coy had stoned their own men who were on guard at Sarafand Camp and refused to let others take their place. When LtCol Acutt of AG10 arrived at Sarafand, he interviewed the RSMS, the O/C, and several of the strikers. The

¹⁸⁴Owing to the almost complete withdrawal of HCT troops from CMF the A-7 Section of A.F.H.Q., CMF, ceased to exist on 1 October 1945. PRO DO35 1183/Y1069/1/1 F52.

¹⁸⁵PRO DO35 1184/Y1069/1/2 F85-88, Personal Letter to Mr. Hall Regarding Demobilization, 4 August 1945.

¹⁸⁶According to military historian Walter Wilcox, "the greatest loneliness that man can experience is that loneliness of war. Even in the midst of his fellows, each man had the inner loneliness that comes from having to face death," in "The Loneliness of the Long Distance Soldier," 88.

¹⁸⁷PRO DO35 1183/Y1069/1/1 F70-81, Report on the Indiscipline in 1943 and 1949 Basuto Companies.

strikers of 1943 Coy had elected a spokesperson who explained their position:

[The Basuto] had contracted to come and fight the war and they were told that when the war was over they would be taken home quickly. The war was over, they were very tired, so tired they could not work any more, and they wanted the authorities to send them home, or at least get them under way. They were not prepared to work any longer. Was it a crime to have won the war; for, having brought it to a successful conclusion, they were still being made to work?¹⁸⁸

LtCol Acutt had the RSMS explain to the men that what they were doing was a Court Martial offense, with a possible sentence of 12 months imprisonment and heavy labor. After several failed attempts to talk the men into going back to work, LtCol Acutt was forced to submit the matter to higher authorities. Forty-two ringleaders were arrested on the spot, and orders were given to the remainder of the 150 to go back to work or they too would face charges.¹⁸⁹ In the meantime, 1949 Coy went on a sympathy strike for 1943 Coy. Nineteen NCOs and 42 AORs had refused to go on guard duty.¹⁹⁰ Unlike 1943 Coy, they eventually acquiesced and returned to their duties.

As the word got out about the arrest and detention of the recalcitrants of 1943 Coy, further resistance erupted among the Basuto.¹⁹¹ According to reports submitted by Major Gray, at least seven companies experienced work strikes and a few had assaulted their British officers and NCOs.¹⁹² When he visited 1934 Coy located outside Haifa, the Commander reported that a company of North Staffordshires, complete with tommy-guns and tanks, were faced off against 100 Basutos who had also refused to go on guard duty.¹⁹³ Gray addressed the Basuto, stopped all attempts to make arrests, and removed the company commander. Why

¹⁸⁸Ibid.

¹⁸⁹Ibid.

¹⁹⁰Ibid.

¹⁹¹Ibid. Those who refused to go back to work were sent to a central punishment center in Egypt, where they were held without pay and placed on reduced rations.

¹⁹²PRO DO35 1183/Y1069/1/1 F42-49, General Report on Basuto Coys in 15 Area, November 1945.

¹⁹³Ibid. F32-37, Report by AG dated 4 December 1945.

the breakdown in order? The reasons were the same in all the Coys: they had been contracted to fight Germans and they had done their duty; the Basuto did not want to be placed on guard duties which presented the possibility of clashes with trained bands of Jews or Arabs. They did not want to get involved in a new war.¹⁹⁴ The Basuto had legitimate reasons for their resistance. They had not been allowed to train as infantry for the war against Germany, yet commanders wanted them to stand guard and be ready to fight against highly trained, well-armed, Palestinian rebel forces.¹⁹⁵

Ignoring the legal implications surrounding the Basuto complaints, G.H.Q./M.E.F. concentrated on maintaining the status quo. However, this was increasingly difficult to do. Things were getting out of hand. Two Basuto soldiers were charged with murdering a Syrian in November.¹⁹⁶ One month later, three Basuto were killed and 12 injured (all of 1943 Coy) in a riot at 57 Military Prison and Detention Barracks.¹⁹⁷ The mutineers were none other than the ones who had refused to work in November. When the Resident Commissioner of Basutoland was informed of the situation in the Middle East, he requested that the Paramount Chieftainess of Basutoland broadcast a message to the troops to calm them down. This was accomplished with little improvement in attitudes. The men seemed to resent that she had been told about problems overseas.¹⁹⁸ All Basuto Coys were now considered a serious liability,

¹⁹⁴PRO DO35 1183/Y1069/1/1 F42-49, Report by LtCol Acutt on Basuto Grievances, 8 December 1945.

¹⁹⁵Several Basuto had already been killed by Jewish terrorist groups. R.A.R. Bent, Ten Thousand Men, 94.

¹⁹⁶PRO DO35 1183/Y1069/1/1 F54, Report on Visit to Syria by LtCol Acutt. The men were found guilty by a Court Martial and sentenced to death. The sentence was mitigated to penal servitude for 10 years.

¹⁹⁷PRO DO35 1183/Y1069/1/1 F16-29 & F30-31, Report on the Shooting at Prison, 16 April 1946. British soldiers opened fire on Basuto prisoners after they had armed themselves with bricks, sticks, etc and refused to go into their cells after sentencing. Two British officers and a nine BORs were injured in the fray.

¹⁹⁸Ibid. One of the Basuto's remarked after hearing the broadcast "when herd boys allow stock into lands you beat the herd boys and do not go and tell their father".

and a direct threat to the overall military discipline and order of the APC.¹⁹⁹ G.H.Q./M.E.F. was doing everything in its power to get them out of the Middle East as soon as possible. The time table had been suddenly moved up, twenty companies (instead of the original four) were to be sent home in December. The final evacuation was expected by the end of February 1946.

In November, morale was reported by AG 10 to be "tolerably satisfactory" among the BaTswana and Swazi companies. Although impressions of BaTswana officers were heavily biased towards a sanitized version of the war and the African voice is nearly inaudible, it appears there had been only a few strikes among the BaTswana, but none serious.²⁰⁰ Tactful handling by company officers and the conciliatory efforts of R.S.M.s Molwa and Rasebolai, persuaded the soldiers to continue their military duties after only a few days on strike.²⁰¹ Inspection reports suggested that primary resistance was kept to a minimum in BaTswana Coys because of a difference in temperament and organization:

It must be added that though the Bechuana Coys have so far given no real trouble, their position on all essential points is identical with that of the Basuto. They have not so far given trouble because they are a quieter people than the Basuto and their Chiefs have much greater power over them.²⁰²

The veterans are fairly quiet on this subject. Klaas Kapaletswe recalled that in his company they had many "discussions" about going home, but that these never erupted in any violence or strikes.²⁰³ Veteran Podithomo Kolobe (1975 Coy) did not remember any discontent in

¹⁹⁹According to LtCol Acutt, "The Basuto had no knowledge or experience of military discipline before the war nor have they during the war acquired much discipline in the strict military sense." It is obvious that hot tempers were already producing untrue statements regarding character, when several months earlier African soldiers had been praised.

²⁰⁰R.A.R. Bent, Ten Thousand Men, 93.

²⁰¹Ibid.

²⁰²PRO D035 1183/Y1069/1/1 F42-49, Report on HCT Troops in Palestine dated 6 December 1945.

²⁰³Klaas Kapaletswe, E.C. 3010, Interview by author, Tlokwen, 16 July 1994.

his company. Oualenna Lekalake backed him up, "there was no discontent because the shipping became regular".²⁰⁴ Many of the soldiers I interviewed did not get home until the Spring of 1946, but continued to perform the duties assigned them in Egypt, Syria and Palestine. The last BaTswana company to leave the Middle East was 1969 Coy (BaKwena and BaTawana). Ten thousand men served the Allied cause during the Second World War and two hundred and sixteen died in service.²⁰⁵

V. The Great Disappointment of War Service

Once the BaTswana soldiers cleared the processing depot in South Africa, they were again placed on trains bound for home. One can only imagine the excitement each man must have felt as they drew closer to their families. Today, one fact overshadows those happy memories of returning home and it has to do with broken promises. According to all the veterans I interviewed and to others interviewed by colleagues, there were several grievances after the war which included the forced turn-in of all military clothing and in some cases personal property, the one suit of clothing issued by military authorities at the dispersal depot²⁰⁶ and only £5 to cover travel expenses home, missing allotments and savings, and the lack of jobs.²⁰⁷ However, the most grievous offense according to veterans Matutu Kolobe, Abang Nkwe, Sello Bogatsu and

²⁰⁴Oualenna Lekalake (1969 Coy), Interview by author, Kumankwane, 14 July 1994.

²⁰⁵BNA S 136/8, Status Report, 1 March 1946; also BNB 447 "Official Civil History of the War". According to the "official civil history", killed in action, 15; died of wounds, 2; died of disease, 165; died of injuries, 28.

²⁰⁶The men were escorted from Durban harbor to Clairwood Camp where they were issued one suit of civilian clothing: pants, shirt, tie, shoes, socks and a hat. According to one report, the clothing was khaki and similar to a uniform. BNA DCG 4/5, File on Demobilization, 1944-1946.

²⁰⁷BNA DCG 4/5, Demobilization of the APC by DC-Gaborone, 9 October 1944. Michael Crowder's interview notes mention that some soldiers were required to turn in their uniforms and watches when they landed at Durban. In addition, some of the men complained that Tshekedi Khama had not put all the money they sent home during the war into savings accounts. A few wives also stated that they received promissory notes for allotments and then never received the money. Handwritten notes found at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, in the Michael Crowder files.

Podithomo Kolobe was that, "we did not get the pensions that were promised to us before we left".²⁰⁸ According to veterans, the diKgosi had assured them they would get a lot of money for serving during the war. If this is true, the diKgosi probably received that information from the British administrators. However, I was unable to locate records of pension guarantees in London or Botswana. It seems likely that promises were informally made during the early recruiting campaigns to get the men to sign up for the AAPC. There is some evidence that pensions were considered for HCT soldiers. In January 1943 a demobilization conference was held by the High Commissioner and attended by many high-ranking military officials, including a representative from the War Office in London.²⁰⁹ It was decided that a uniform policy which mirrored that of the Union's War Pensions Act would be implemented. This would preclude any problems with ex-soldier's from the Union and the HCT comparing their benefits once they had returned to work in the South African mines.²¹⁰ Basically, the War Office wanted to transfer all responsibility for pensions to the High Commissioner's Office and thus avoid any future financial liabilities.

The only pensions allocated to ex-soldiers were disability and death benefits to surviving family members as laid under the Army Pension Scheme, established under Royal Warrant. Altogether 567 disability pensions were awarded to discharged soldiers and 190 to widows and dependents.²¹¹ Of these, 357 and 60 respectively were awarded during 1945; funds were provided by the British Government.²¹² "Alternative pensions" for loss of earning capacities (for educated ex-

²⁰⁸Interviews by author, Botswana, July 1994.

²⁰⁹Full report can be read in London: PRO DO35 1184/Y1069/3/2 F19-56.

²¹⁰Ibid.

²¹¹In May 1942, Private Kgowe (BP 3036), died in the Middle East. His wife, Mmamalete received a check in the amount of L7.9/3. DCG 3/7 Box No. 3, Letter from DC Gaberone to Government Secretary Mafeking dated 30 September 1942.

²¹²BNB 447, "Official Civil History of the War," under Bechuanaland Protectorate, 6.

servicemen, especially NCOs), were turned down.²¹³ I quote Mr. Willis, "the War Office will not bear responsibility for expenses for vocational training of fit men" and "as soon as you discharge a fit soldier, the War Office has nothing more to do with him".²¹⁴ From these statements, it is obvious that Great Britain was going to deny any pecuniary responsibility to APC veterans.

Under the Union's Pension Plan veterans were entitled to benefits according to their racial background:

	Discharged with benefits		Discharged without benefits	
	Cash	Clothing	Cash	Clothing
Europeans	£5	£25	£5	£15
Cape Coloured	£3	£15	£3	£9
NMC	£2	(Khaki Suit) worth £2	£4	Nil

In addition to cash and clothing, the men were authorized tools and equipment up to £20, if required for a job; leave on full pay up to the amount standing to the credit of the soldier on discharge.²¹⁵

The War Office tried to qualify these benefits for HCT veterans further at the conference. Leave was capped at 14 days and the cash payment was thought unnecessary. According to Mr. Willis, "the War Office was up against the question of expense".²¹⁶ The argument followed that since APC soldiers had large sums of deferred pay (£10 or £15) due to them, they did not need any cash payment on discharge.

To give the HCT representatives credit, especially LtCol Arden-Clarke, they tried to get the War Office to be more generous and allow the cash bonus since the NMC was entitled. The only other source of

²¹³Resident Commissioners argued that hardship would be caused to persons such as chiefs and teachers and similar classes of educated Africans earning considerable salaries if no provision for alternative pensions were made. DO 35/1184 Y1062/3 Letter from High Commissioner's Office to Brigadier Salisbury Jones, 30 January 1943.

²¹⁴Ibid.

²¹⁵Ibid. Also Edward Roux, Time Longer Than Rope, 317.

²¹⁶Ibid.

revenue would be the territories themselves. Those funds originated with the Imperial Treasury, which supposedly could not bear the costs associated with a cash pension either. According to Priestman (Dominion's Office), "the Union Government will provide certain benefits for their demobilized soldiers and the reason why these other ex-Imperial service people (HCT) are not provided with benefits is because the Imperial Government cannot pay or rather they have not yet available any scheme of their own".²¹⁷

To sum up, the War Office and the Imperial Treasury were not going to provide any pensions for ex-soldiers from the HCT. Certainly, the Union was not going to pay any benefits to these ex-soldiers over what the NMC was entitled. The only way anyone was going to get any money, was to be disabled or dead. For the veterans in the HCT, getting money for disabilities was a nightmare. The medical boards met only in the Union. The Resident Commissioner's were responsible for forwarding all the "correctly filled out" applications to the board members. Appeals, if processed at all, could take a long time. It is no wonder that veterans remain bitter about their post-war experiences. Today, a few of the veterans continue to lobby the current government for their pensions. Considering that many of these men are quite old, the government seems to be under no pressure to honor their demands.

²¹⁷Ibid.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion

During the Second World War, the recruitment, organization, training and employment of the Bechuanaland Pioneers and Gunners can be fully understood only when placed in the social and political context of British colonial Africa. The process of mobilization was influenced by several factors: British military policy as administered by colonial officials; pressures from South Africa; the precarious position of the diKgosi; public opinion; the absence of effective mechanisms for enforcing the laws concerning military conscription (especially merafe customary laws); and certain broadly shared attitudes about duty to the British empire.

Britain's military policy--the plan of action which encompassed how and for what purpose war was waged--changed over the years. In the nineteenth century, colonial authorities sought merely to field small detachments of military forces for the purpose of putting down African revolts. During the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902), Great Britain reluctantly recruited African forces for logistical support, intelligence, and military manpower. Never envisioning the need for an African imperial army of any magnitude, Great Britain neglected to develop a long-term military policy that would provide for mobilization of African resources in times of crisis. Throughout the early years of the twentieth century, colonial African forces remained small, disorganized and ill-trained. White attitudes which fostered racism, segregation, and class divisions within military structures grew more rigid. Accordingly, Britain's central problem during both world wars was one of putting together a military policy that would win acceptance from military commanders, colonial officials, indigenous leaders, and the local populations. As demonstrated by the 1939 mobilization of Bechuanaland, British authorities struggled to meet military recruiting goals within an environment of distrust and resistance.

In a general sense, the colonial administration's disregard for

the desires of the diKgosi for combatant status reflected the military and social milieu in which previous wars were fought in southern Africa. The nineteenth century was an age of growing resistance against arming Africans in "white men's quarrels." Politicians thought it unnecessary and undesirable to excite white public opinion at any level regarding the employment of blacks as soldiers of the crown. However, the Anglo-Boer War pointed up that, in colonial southern Africa, mobilization for war required more than simply raising and organizing regiments of white soldiers. The war and the problems of logistics (especially supply and transportation) disclosed that African populations must also be mobilized for support roles. During both world wars, mobilization of African manpower required rallying black public opinion and employing the coercive powers of the colonial administration to compel cooperation and punish disaffection. Arguably, mobilizing African manpower was the most critical challenge faced by colonial administrators during the Second World War, where widespread apathy created the need for some kind of artificial stimulation.

The importance of the political mobilization of Bechuanaland was poorly recognized at first. In part for that reason, the attempts of colonial leaders to excite a war spirit was generally uninspired. The protectorate's newspapers, educated African elites, religious leaders and some diKgosi (especially Tshekedi Khama) were mediums of propaganda. Yet, few volunteers stepped forward.¹ Subsequently, traditional merafe techniques of mobilizing manpower in times of war were implemented. Age regiments were called up by local leaders, and the men were required to report for physical examinations. Those who were classified as physically fit for military service were placed into Pioneer companies

¹"Most recruits did not volunteer but were prodded or threatened by the chiefs. We also know that wherever colonialists used chiefs as agents of recruitment for labor or war, the line between voluntary and compulsory service was usually very thin." D. Kiyaga-Mulindwa, "The Bechuanaland Protectorate and the Second World War," in Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History, XII, (3 May 1984), 38.

and sent to Lobatsi for training. Under these circumstances, African resistance to recruitment took many forms including evasion, grudging and half-hearted service, and desertion.

Those who volunteered or accepted their fate as soldiers perhaps benefitted from their military service. The army was in fact a school for Africans. As African soldiers within a British military system, they learned the arts of modern warfare, trades, the English language, and habits of physical training, health and hygiene, punctuality, and order. Soldiers had geographical and vertical mobility through wartime service, often improving their social and economic position during the war. The economic benefits of full-time military employment consisted of steady pay, uniforms, regular food, and access to free medical care. Many soldiers were able to save money to buy cattle and land, settle divorce cases, send their children to school, and improve their families' living conditions at home.² Wartime service often meant a chance to rebuild self-esteem and status within colonial (and sometimes merafe) administrative structures. Of course individual and group gains must be weighed against cultural losses such as the loss of labor, family disruptions, and perhaps some stagnation of the economy at home during the war.³

The army was also a social institution of change bringing British soldiers and African pioneers and gunners together in new work relationships. The social attitudes of white military men concerning ethnic and racial problems usually reflected the prevailing social and intellectual currents of British thought during the period, thus the military reflected changing societal values. For example, some British officers who served as African liaisons with the Pioneer companies had a

²Ibid., 47-48.

³According to D. Kiyaga-Mulindwa, "one positive economic aspect of the war was that almost all able-bodied men and women of the Protectorate were kept employed during the war years." "The Bechuanaland Protectorate and the Second World War," in Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History, XII, (3 May 1984), 47.

greater interest in African affairs. However, the worst aspects of white military control were a frequent paternalism, which stifled progress within the military rank structure, or, on the other hand resulted in a dehumanizing regimentation, overly harsh discipline, particularly among those officers who neither understood nor sympathized with the plight of their fellow African soldiers. Moreover, British policies of segregating African soldiers from their white comrades may have actually promoted racism and disciplinary problems later in the war.

Efforts at maintaining separate-but-equal recreational facilities backfired--causing increased racial tensions and feelings of differential treatment. Differential pay, for example, created complaints among African servicemen. In most cases where units behaved badly, a case can be made that they did so because they were not entirely segregated; that is, they had white officers and non-commissioned officers who paid the price. Segregated service required greater organization and proved incredibly inefficient. Soldiers could not be reassigned as easily according to military needs without regard to company integrity. With a more flexible policy, depleted white units could have been more quickly reinforced with black replacements, especially during the Italian campaign. Ultimately, this led to a decline in morale and efficiency within the African Pioneer Corps.

Imposing service-wide integration of British units with African soldiers would have pitted the British military authorities against colonial officials both in Britain, South Africa, and the Protectorate. They often argued that segregation was necessary to protect the physical well-being of BaTswana soldiers because racial attacks were still common occurrences within other integrated units (particularly South African units). The British idea of protectionism seemed particularly resilient to change when it came to decisions regarding all the High Commissioned Territories. Perhaps, this was a legacy of the long struggle to

maintain political, economic and territorial autonomy for these British territories against South African imperialism. Thus, military leaders generally shied away from racial issues while maintaining the status quo. Racial reforms were not within their purview, but belonged at a higher societal level. It is also important to remember, in Bechuanaland, that the value of segregation partly hinged on the way in which the diKgosi viewed their military contribution (unique and separate from the Union's effort) and the maintenance of their cultural integrity (distinct from other colonial units).

The act of segregating the African Pioneer Corps internally and externally from outside contacts had a cultural impact. The organization of the corps into companies based on geographic and ethnic background led to an increased sense of merafe pride, while at the same time stifling integrative or nationalist feelings among soldiers during the war.⁴ Although many pioneer and gunner companies had periodic contact with other BaTswana and HCT units (the Basuto and Swazis), in general, they remained isolated in organization, training and assignment. Perhaps segregation was a better policy than integration for the BaTswana. It is possible that segregation prevented excessive competition and inter-ethnic rivalries within military units. The BaTswana were less exposed to the negative aspects of social change such as alcohol and sexual abuses. However, a great opportunity was lost to build stronger inter-merafe relationships during the war based on the shared experiences of separation from their homelands, loneliness, physical deprivations, and the many hardships associated with labor duties. As a result, after the war, veterans shared a bond with members of their own communities but never organized as a group to fight for their veteran benefits or employment opportunities for ex-servicemen.

⁴Ibid., 49. Perhaps the reverse could also be argued: the act of trying to segregate AAPC units reflects a strong sense of emerging nationalism by some BaTswana leaders, particularly Tshekedi Khama.

In the extraordinary circumstances of war, the British colonial relationships of power, race and class were challenged in the process of mobilizing the empire. Despite many difficulties, the colonies provided the desperately needed manpower and other resources. In Bechuanaland, the feelings of reciprocity which had been built up during the war gave way to the desire to return to normalcy. For most of the soldiers I interviewed, that meant rebuilding their family relationships and concentrating on economic life in the rural areas. The government had given much attention to demobilization, and most soldiers were re-absorbed into civilian life with relative ease, and were therefore not be a political problem for the administration. According to D. Kiyaga-Mulindwa, "the rural life to which most of the AAPC men returned contributed to their lack of solidarity and joint political activity."⁵ The British home government put little effort into pensions for disabled soldiers or retraining programs for African ex-volunteers from Bechuanaland, claiming the critical lack of monetary resources in the post-war period and political ramifications in South Africa. Obviously, many of the same limitations and outside pressures which dictated British policy in Bechuanaland before the war had not changed in 1949. However, one constant remained, "Britain remained morally bound to refuse transfer of the Protectorate to South Africa as long as it was against the will of the inhabitants of the High Commission Territories."⁶ BaTswana's participation in the Second World War may have been a decisive factor in maintaining the Protectorate's freedom from the disastrous fate of South African blacks with the 1948 electoral victory of the Afrikaner Nationalist Party and the institutionalization of apartheid after the war.⁷

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid.

⁷According to David Killingray, in South Africa increased agitation for political and economic opportunities by Africans after WWII led directly to the National Party electoral victory in 1948. "War and Society in Africa since 1800," in SAHJ 25 (1991), 153.

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INTERVIEWS

The following interviews were carried out in Botswana throughout 1993 and 1994. Most of the interviews were conducted with the help of an interpreter, Mr. Mmualefhe Raditladi, who has extended his generous help to other researchers in Botswana such as Professor Fred Morton. The inquiry sought out male informants with military service backgrounds. Interviews started with specific questions about their military service with the African Auxiliary Pioneer Corps including service number, rank, dates of service, place of service and jobs held while in the military. They were followed by open-ended questions about the individual's experiences and impressions regarding the Second World War. In some cases, the informants produced military memorabilia and photographs which were helpful in the discussions. All interviews were tape recorded and copies were submitted to the Kgosi Sechele I Museum in Molepolole, Botswana and can be reviewed with the help of the Chairman and Director of Research, Dr Jeff Ramsay. I am also grateful to Dr Barry Morton for assisting in the interviews while I was in Botswana and for supplying some interviews that he personally conducted in Maun throughout 1993.

Baletloa, B. R. Kgosi, Born 1921. 1984 Coy. Service No. E.C. 10035. Interviewed in Gaborone West, Botswana, 13 July 1994. Interviewers: Deborah Shackleton and Barry Morton. Tape Recording. Non-Commissioned Officer: Regimental Sergeant Major (Damascus and Egypt).

Bampusi, Kakanyo Ketsogile, Born: 1914. 1969 Coy. Service No. 12415. Interviewed in Maun, Botswana, 17 November 1993. Interviewer: Barry Morton. Note: 42. Driver and Mechanic in M.E. and Italy (Cassino).

Batloboga, Judge, Born: 1919. 1978 Coy. Service No. 12,217. Interviewed in Maun, Botswana, 23 March 1994. Interviewer: Barry Morton. Note: 41. General Pioneer Duties in the M.E. and Italy.

Bogatsu, Selelo, Born 1922. 1987 Coy. Service No. 3166. Interviewed in Tlokwen, Botswana, 16 July 1994. Interviewers: Deborah Shackleton and Mmualefhe Raditladi (trans.). Tape Recording. Non-Commissioned Officer: Sergeant. General Pioneer Duties in the M.E. Best Interview on Conditions in the M.E. and Quassasin Camp.

Chombo, Rebamo, Born: 1919. 1978 Coy. Service No. 12341. Interviewed in Maun, Botswana. 28 November 1993. Interviewer: Barry Morton. Note: 125. Guard Duties in the M.E. and Italy.

Gaborone, Trouble, Born: 1918. 1987 Coy. Service No. 2165. Interviewed in Tlokwen, Botswana, 19 July 1994. Interviewers: Deborah Shackleton and Mmualefhe Raditladi (trans.). Notes. Lance Corporal. General Pioneer Duties in M.E.

Gomosie, Baletanye, Born: 1910. 1978 Coy. Service No. Unknown. Interviewed in Maun, Botswana 23 October 1993. Interviewer: Barry Morton. Note: 35. General Pioneer Duties in the M.E. (Salvage).

Kepaletswe, Klaas, Born: 1906. Coy: unknown. Service No. 3010.
 Interviewed in Tlokwen, Botswana, 16 July 1994.
 Interviewers: Deborah Shackleton and Mmualefhe Raditladi
 (trans.). Tape Recording. Private. Anti-aircraft Gunner
 in M.E. and Italy.

Kgasa, Robert, Born: 1903, 1971 Coy, Service No. unknown.
 Interviewed in Kanye, Botswana, 7 July 1994.
 Interviewer: Deborah Shackleton and Barry Morton.
 Tape Recording. Non-Commissioned Officer: RSM
 and Chaplain.

Kgeretlhwa, Omphile, Born: 1910. 1978 Coy. Service No. 12263.
 Interviewed in Toteng, Botswana, 6 March 1994.
 Interviewer: Barry Morton. Note: 109. Military Police
 in M.E.

Kolobe, Matutu, Born: 1901. 1975 Coy. Service No. 3019.
 Interviewed in Tlokwen, Botswana, 19 July 1994.
 Interviewers: Deborah Shackleton and Mmualefhe Raditladi
 (trans.). Tape Recording. Anti-aircraft Gunner in
 Italy (Cassino).

Kolobe, Podithomo, Born: 1905. 1975 Coy. Service No. unknown.
 Interviewed in Tlokwen, Botswana, 19 July 1994.
 Interviewers: Deborah Shackleton and Mmualefhe Raditladi
 (trans.). Tape Recording. Private. Anti-aircraft Gunner
 and Steevedover in M.E. and Italy.

Kuhanga, Kamayanda, Born: 1916. 1978 Coy. Service No. 1223?
 Interviewed in Dobe, Botswana, 2 March 1994. Interviewer:
 Barry Morton. Note: 115. General Pioneer Duties in the
 M.E.

Lekalake, Oualenna, Born 1922. 1969 Coy. Service No. 11319.
 Interviewed in Kumankwane, Botswana, 14 July 1994.
 Interviewers: Deborah Shackleton and Mmualefhe Raditladi
 (trans.). Tape Recording. Corporal. Bridge-builder (River
 Po) and Corpse Collection in Italy.

Lekongwa, Gaothomolo, Born: 1905. 1978 Coy. Service No. 12099.
 Interviewed in Gumare, Botswana, 17 February 1994.
 Interviewer: Barry Morton. Note: 10. Non-Commissioned
 Officer: Sergeant. Guard Duty in M.E. and Italy.

Mabi, Motlotlegi Galetlobogwe, Born: 1901. 1978 Coy. Service
 No. 12344. Interviewed in Samboyo, Botswana, 4 March
 1994. Interviewer: Barry Morton. Note: 120. Guard Duties
 in the M.E. and Italy.

Mafoko, Taulo, Born: unknown. 1978 Coy. Service No. unknown.
 Interviewed in Etsha, Botswana, 18 February. 1994.
 Interviewer: Barry Morton. Note: 21. Loaded Ammunition
 in M.E.

Marapi, Jacob, Born: 1920. 1978 Coy. Service No. unknown.
 Interviewed in Samedupe, Botswana, 25 November 1993.
 Interviewer: Barry Morton. Note: 73. Anti-aircraft Gunner
 in M.E.

Matlapeng, Bonang, Born: unknown. Coy: unknown. Service No. 304? Interviewed in Tlokwen, Botswana, 18 July 1994. Interviewers: Deborah Shackleton and Mmualefhe Raditladi (trans.). Tape Recording. Private. Anti-Aircraft Gunner in M.E. and Italy.

Moelenyane, Mogalage, Born: 1910. 1978 Coy. Service No. 12308. Interviewed in Bodibeng, Botswana, 5 March 1994. Interviewer: Barry Morton. Note: 5. Repaired Shoes During the War (M.E.).

Moeng, Legatalle, Born: unknown. Coy: unknown. Service No. 2232. Interviewed in Odi, Botswana, 18 July 1994. Interviewers: Deborah Shackleton and Mmualefhe Raditladi (trans.). Tape Recording. Anti-Aircraft Gunner in M.E. and Italy (Cassino).

Mogwe, O. T. Reverend, Service No. unknown. Interviewed in Kanye, Botswana, 7 July 1994. Interviewers: Deborah Shackleton and Barry Morton. Tape Recording. Non-Commissioned Officer and Chaplain in the Middle East and Italy.

Molamu, Bontsetse, Born: 1900. 1978 Coy. Service No. 12252. Interviewed in Tsau, Botswana, 1 March 1994. Interviewer: Barry Morton. Note: 112. Corporal. General Pioneer Duties in M.E. and Italy.

Monthusi, K., Born: 1918. Coy: unknown. Service No. 1486 and 11,318 (discharged and then reinstated). Interviewed in Kumankwane, Botswana, 14 July 1996. Interviewers: Deborah Shackleton and Mmualefhe Raditladi (trans.). Tape Recording. Private. General Pioneer Duties in M.E. and Italy. His wife also provided an interview on military allotments.

Ngakaemang, Semanngalele, Born: 1915. 1980 Coy. Service No. 1562. Interviewed in Kumankwane, Botswana, 14 July 1994. Interviewers: Deborah Shackleton and Mmualefhe Raditladi (trans.). Tape Recording. Non-Commissioned Officer: Sergeant. Bridge-builder in M.E. and Italy.

Nkwe, Abang, Born: 1921. 1987 Coy. Service No. 3167. Interviewed in Tlokwen, Botswana, 18 July 1994. Interviewers: Deborah Shackleton and Mmualefhe Raditladi (trans.). Tape Recording. Corporal. Guard Duties and Interpreter in M.E.

Otukile, Mahono, Born: 1917. 1978 Coy. Service No. 12228. Interviewed in Maun, Botswana, 19 January 1994. Interviewer: Barry Morton. Note: 45. Lance-Corporal. Salvage Work and Driver in M.E.

Rabanna, Keodirile, Born: 1919. 1978 Coy. Service No. unknown. Interviewed in Maun, Botswana, 23 November 1993. Interviewer: Barry Morton. Note: 57. Loaded Ammunition in M.E. and Italy.

Ragoitsiwe, Moramedi, Born: 1920. 1978 Coy. Service No. 12091. Interviewed in Gumare, Botswana, 19 February 1994. Interviewer: Barry Morton. Note: 14. Salvage and Driver in M.E.

Raubas, Ramabotlole, Born: unknown. 1978 Coy. Service No. unknown. Interviewed in Maun, Botswana, 27 November 1993. Interviewer: Barry Morton. Note: 58. General Pioneer Duties in the M.E.

Retio, Hawanayana Sebarome, Born: 1910. 1978 Coy. Service No. unknown. Interviewed 27 November 1993. Interviewer: Barry Morton. Note: 72. General Pioneer Duties in the M.E.

Sawete, Selawe, Born: 1919. 1978 Coy. Service No. Interviewed in Matlapaneng, Botswana, 10 November 1993. Interviewer: Barry Morton. Note: 31. Served in M.E. and Italy (Cassino).

Seboni, B. R. T., Veteran No. Unknown. Egypt 1946. Interviewed in Gaborone West, Botswana, 7 July 1994. Interviewers: Deborah Shackleton and Barry Morton. Notes. Corporal. Garrison Duties and Clerk. Brother O.J. Seboni served in WWII.

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EDUCATION

PhD., Indiana University, African History, 1997
M.A., Indiana University, African History, 1989, Summa Cum Laude
B.A., University of Northern Colorado, History, 1984, Magna Cum Laude

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE: EMPLOYMENT AND COURSES TAUGHT

Fall 1995-Spg 97, Director of World and Area Studies and Assistant Professor of History, U.S. Air Force Academy, Dept of History.

- Supervises eight officers/instructors within the division
- Responsible for instruction and development of introductory and upper-division classes
- Directly responsible for reviewing and approving all syllabi for the World and Area Studies courses at USAFA
- Liaison to the International Program Council
- Prepares performance reports for six officers/instructors
- Courses now teaching:
 - "Historiography and Methodology of History", Fall 96-Spg 97
 - Practicum for all history majors
 - "Modern World History", Fall 96

Fall 1989-1993, Assistant Professor, U.S. Air Force Academy, Dept of History. Break for PhD program Aug 92-Aug 95.

- Responsible for instruction and development of introductory and upper-division classes
- Courses taught include:
 - "History of Sub-Saharan Africa", Spg 90, Fall 91, Fall 95. Upper-division survey; chose texts, re-wrote syllabus, devised new assignments to include African novels, films, primary sources.
 - "History of Modern Africa", Spg 96. Interdisciplinary course involving political science, economics and geography departments. Prepare seven students to participate in Model OAU. Wrote syllabus, chose texts, assignments and methods of evaluation.
 - "South Africa: The Evolution of a Society", Spg 92. Upper-division interdisciplinary course involving five depts. Wrote syllabus, chose texts, developed lectures, invited guest speakers, and developed assessment criteria. Lectures, novels, films, debates, and panels used to focus on the process of change in South Africa prior to independence.
 - "Introduction to Military History", Fall 91. Sophomore-level required course for all cadets; used standard texts and syllabus; use my own lectures, assignments, and methods of evaluation.
 - "Modern World History", nine semesters between 1989-1996. Including honors sections. Required course for all first year students; revised syllabus, texts, and assignments

- for honor sections
- Faculty and staff duties have included:
 - Personnel duties, Fall 91-Spg 92. Recruiting, reviewing applications, interviewing, coordinating military hiring at USAFA
 - Summer Academic AOC, Summer 90. Supervised a squadron of cadets taking summer classes. Personnel matters, discipline and advising
 - Chair, African Studies Group, 1991-1992; 1995-1997
 - Department representative to World History Association
 - Currently Secretary/Treasurer of Regional Rocky Mountain World History Association
 - Academic advisor to history majors
 - Several Military History Symposium Committees
 - Protocol Officer for Fall 1996 Symposium at USAFA

Fall 1987-89, Selected for AFIT Master's Degree Program, Air Force Academy sponsorship in history. Indiana University

May-July 1987, Squadron Officer School, Distinguished Graduate

August 1984-87, Stationed at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio
 1984-85, Registrar Office, Counselor and Coder
 1985-86, Assistant Chief Airmans Education and Commissioning Program, Evaluation and Counseling
 1986-87, Air Force Institute of Technology International Training Management Officer
 1987- Air Force Institute of Technology Protocol Officer for Brigadier General Toner and Brigadier General Boyd

GRANTS AND ACADEMIC AWARDS

- INSS and AFIT Grants, 1994. Research and travel grant for dissertation research in Botswana and London
- INRF Grant, 1992. Four week travel grant for country familiarization to South Africa
- Air Force Institute of Technology scholarship grants for M.A. and Ph.D. programs at Indiana University

PUBLICATIONS AND CONFERENCES

Book Review: Building Tomorrow Today: African Workers in Trade Unions, 1970-1984 by Steven Friedman. International Journal of African Historical Studies, 22, 2 (1989).

Dissertation: "Imperial Military Policy and the Bechuanaland Pioneers and Gunners during the Second World War".

M.A. Thesis: "South African Blacks and World War I: The South West African Campaign, 1914-1915".

Conference Papers: "Bechuanaland Soldiers During the Second World War". African Studies Association, 38th Annual Meeting, Orlando, Florida, 3-6 November, 1995

"Tswana Soldiers and Their Families During World War Two". African Studies Association, 39th Annual Meeting, San Francisco, 23-26 November 1996.

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

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